

BROOKFIELD



STATE OF THE TOWN



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♦ INTRODUCTION ♦

Dear Brookfielders,

By working together Town employees, the volunteer Town Boards and Commissions and Brookfield residents have continued to meet the challenges we've been experiencing over the past two years. While we can't boast that all is well for each individual resident, we can be proud that the Town overall is quite well.

The adoption of a sound, equitable and uncontested budget, the completion of a water line, the implementation of APRA programs, acquiring a new town wide communication system and the near completion of the new elementary school construction project are only a few examples of a Brookfield united and moving forward.

We have a lot of tough decisions and work in front of us. There is no doubt in my mind that by working together, we can meet the challenges ahead to make Brookfield better yet. We can thank our Department Heads and Board/Commission Chairmen - all working diligently to keep Brookfield wonderful.

Our volunteers remain numerous, dedicated and invaluable. We saw the will of our stalwart volunteers throughout Covid at the vaccine clinic; we saw the loyal work of our EMS, Firefighters, and Police as they procured and distributed PPE and self-test kits; we saw and continue to see the devotion of our Food Pantry, Brookfield Cares, and so many Volunteers. Thank you will never suffice. The people of Brookfield never fail to come together to work for the good of the community. And it is that "coming together" – that unfaltering spirit of its people – that makes Brookfield the special community that it is.

In the following pages, you'll see what I'm calling our "state of the town," an unabridged version of what each of the functional town leads are planning, accomplishing and focused on with the funds we provide through our tax dollars. Hopefully you will find areas that pique your interest and answer questions as to what's going on in a particular part of our municipal government.

The state of the town is broken down by section and, for the most part, in the functional lead's own words. The goal is to inform you of where we have been as a municipality, where we are going and what it will take to get there. If a board, commission or department is not listed, they did not submit a report. This document is for information only and is a snapshot in time. It is not intended to answer all of your questions, nor is it intended to be an enduring document, as the environment changes. Over the course of preparing this document, some of the contributors may have moved on, and economic conditions and other social factors that have impacted our lives, may have rendered portions obsolete. I hope that you can appreciate the incredible amount of work that goes on in Town Hall and across town as we endeavor to make Brookfield the best place to live in Connecticut!

Tara Carr, First Selectwoman

ASSESSOR *Tammie Fiske*

Four years ago, we experienced a macro burst that hit on May 15, 2018. It took almost two years to get property values back to where they were prior to the storm - and in some cases higher, as the town was rebuilt in certain areas. There are still several properties in town that have not been made whole due to insurance issues and other factors. Things were starting to move positively as we were busy with permits and a good economy. The pandemic propelled us into a new world.

By the spring of 2020, managers were running the departments solo on premises and employees worked remotely. We had Covid cases in the building and had to shut town hall for a week to disinfect, as we didn't have protocols at that time. When permitted to return, we were short on PPE and cleaning supplies, and could not meet with people in person – most difficult for our seniors. We improvised with a copy box and eventually a rolling mailbox to drop off and pick up paperwork. The staff moved to 100% remote work, with management in the office, supported by personal cell phones and Zoom. Permit inspections were done before and after the workday.

Over time, we rotated people back to an office divided by Plexiglas. The tax bills went out on time and all applications for elderly residents were processed. Through this period, three members of our team needed surgery. By Labor Day, a new team was forming. During the Fall, I worked on the RFP for the town revaluation and the bid and started the 2021 revaluation.

We updated our CAMA program to Vision 8 and maintained two databases during this year - time consuming, but necessary. I trained and transitioned a new staff from the old program to the new, while acclimating them to the assessment world.



In January 2021, as we worked to complete the 2020 Grand list, a Covid case forced us home for a week without notice. We worked remotely and were able to complete the Grand list on time. My last hire was made permanent, one was promoted, and by mid-January 2021, I had my new team. Year two of Covid was a little better - people were able to get vaccinated and out. Precautions continued, such as spreading out appointments and using technology in lieu of face-to-face meetings. Customers were met in the foyer and socially distanced if they needed to come into the office.

The Governor wouldn't allow revaluation companies to do interior inspections, so a mailer was used instead in its place. We had to rely on exterior inspections and measurements only. Phone calls were made to the homeowners when there were major discrepancies. Photos on interior changes or corrections were required and I did a few inspections when necessary.

My staff attended classes by Zoom this year as they could not attend Assessor School at UConn as normally done (cancelled entirely in 2020). Meetings were also conducted over Zoom. The revaluation was wrapped up, Vision had their hearings and final numbers were set in January 2022. We finalized the Grand list for 2021 and certified the 2021 revaluation with the state at the end of January 2021. Overall, Brookfield's Grand list increased by almost a half billion dollars due to the "hot" real estate market and supply chain issues.

After revaluation, the Assessor's office starts a new chapter for the next five years. Real estate values remain the same unless the owner takes out a permit, does work without a permit, has a fire or demolition, or we discover something that wasn't already assessed. We're now in the appeal phase post revaluation. I've been meeting with all the Board members individually to go over their concerns and the current market conditions with regards to the 2021 revaluation. By the end of June, we'll know how many appeals develop into lawsuits.

Between February 1 - November 1, we process several hundred elderly, veteran, blind, disabled, and handicap applications, along with approximately 1500 personal property forms, over 500 income and expense forms, and several hundred outstanding building permits. We additionally process a regular and supplemental motor vehicle list (approx. 20,000 vehicles combined). Annually, my office values all the real and personal property in Brookfield to file the Grand list in January, which determines the net assessment. We anticipate the move of one staff member to a neighboring town hall, thus will be rebuilding the team and focused on advanced training. There's significant backlog of filing from the 2021 revaluation and field notes to organize and store.

We're focused on training - two of the staff will attend Assessor School for a class in June. The Assistant Assessor is working towards her CCMA I certification. Once we hire the new staff member, we'll finish our Vision training and will build individual skills throughout the department. I won a scholarship through the Northeastern Regional Association of Assessing Officers (NRAAO) worth \$1235 and can take twenty-four credits towards my 2024 Assessor recertification in May 2022. I plan to complete the last seven hours of recertification for my Appraisal license, due in August 2022 if I'm unable to use an Assessor class. Finally, we'll replace the oldest revaluation paperwork and get the proper authorization to shred what isn't needed.

ARTS COMMISSION

Catherine Malek

The responsibilities of the Brookfield Arts Commission are to engage in activities to promote understanding and appreciation of the arts to residents of the town, to encourage community participation in arts activities, to coordinate information concerning artists and the arts in the town, to act as a liaison between artists, schools and the community, to engage in activities designed to encourage local artists in demonstrating their talents and to promote activities that both entertain and enlighten. A vibrant arts scene is an asset to a town, complementing its natural features and helping to attract both residents and businesses. To accomplish its objectives, the Arts Commission receives \$3,500 of funding from the town each year. For the past several years, the Commission has organized a range of activities for Brookfielders of all ages. These included the "Shorts and to the Point" film festival, art exhibits in Town Hall, sidewalk chalk and rock painting events for children, a guided map of holiday lights at residents' houses as well as gingerbread house building in the Christmas season and participation in the Four Corners Block Party. Some of these activities were suspended or done virtually during the Covid 19 pandemic, but hopefully all will be able to take place in person this year.



The film festival returned in April with the addition of a new session featuring short films by creative artists from Connecticut and neighboring states. The festival was a great success, raising over \$2,000 through donations to fund a scholarship for a Brookfield resident high school senior who plans to pursue tertiary education in some field of the arts.

The Arts Commission as a whole, or individual Commission members, have collaborated with other Town groups on many recent arts-related projects, working with the Conservation Commission for the creation and installation of a barn quilt at a property on Nabby Rd, with the Library Director on the appointment of a Poet Laureate, with the Development Director on the planning for a civic sculpture to be located in the Pocket Park in the Four Corners project, with the Theatre for the Arts on the film festival and with the Senior Center on the creation of a spectacular mosaic that's now in the lobby of that building. These connections promote a strong network of arts interests in Brookfield.

Several new members joined the Commission in the past year. That brings the promise of additional ideas for arts events. But all the Commission's work relies on the commitment of time and energy of its volunteer members. Perhaps the biggest challenge to broadening the range of arts events is availability of that time, particularly from those members who also hold full-time jobs. Priority will be given to those events that touch the largest number of people in Brookfield and those that bring the largest benefits to the town.

BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS

Julie Kerton

This board operates as an intermediary between the assessor and the courts. Our board currently consists of three elected members: Julie Kerton, Realtor, Chairperson; Julie Blick - Assistant Assessor Town of New Fairfield; Jeff Bronn - School Teacher and Gina Ostergard – Secretary. The board enables taxpayers to be heard by their peers at no expense. Assessment reviews help ensure that property valuations are just and equitable.

Assessment review is an extended process; it begins with the assessor and ends with the Board of Assessment Appeals. This process is of prime concern to all Connecticut municipalities, as they are dependent on the revenues raised by property taxes. The changes we make as a board affect the Grand list, which affects the budget and therefore taxes.

The town holds a reevaluation of all property every 5 years. Each year thereafter until the next revaluation, all properties must be valued at the last reval date. Thus, the largest number of appeals occurs in the year of the reval and the year after. The board meets in March for Real Estate and Personal Property Appeals and in September for Motor vehicles. The board should make changes in keeping with the municipality's system. This ensures uniform assessment and helps to avoid charges of inequities by taxpayers.

The Board should have a rationale for changes, consistent with the municipality's assessment system and justifiable within it. In 2021, two of our board members, Julie Kerton and Jeff Brohn, attended Board of Assessment Appeal seminars. Julie Blick had attended previously.

Two years ago, in March of 2020, our board met at town hall to hear Real Estate Appeals. We were the last board to meet in person before the Covid shut down. At that time, our board members were me as chair, Julie Kerton and Arthur Cresci. We heard 23 appeals. We teamed well as a board and with the assistance of the assessor, Tammie Fiske, on some technical questions, completed our task. September, we heard Motor vehicle appeals and in March of 2021, we heard 8 Real Estate appeals. Jeff Bronn had replaced Arthur Cresci, following an election.

March 2022 is a Revaluation year. The market has exploded and as expected, property values went up significantly. The assessor's office sent out increase notices in December/January, so all taxpayers are aware of their new value and were given the option to appeal to this board.



We have approximately 55 appeals. Our secretary, Gina Ostergard, has diligently scheduled all appointments within two weeks. Each board member has met individually with the Assessor, Tammie Fiske, to review results in advance of the meeting.

We're prepared to review all documentation, hear appeals, and perform inspections, if necessary. Anyone who disagrees with our result may take their case to the superior court.

Looking to the future, we'd like to see a charter/ordinance revision to allow our board to have an alternate. We're the only board without one. It's important that we have an equal board making decisions, and if one of the members cannot attend a meeting, it becomes an issue. Thank you in advance.

BOARD OF ETHICS

Alice Carolan

The Board of Ethics consists of three residents appointed by the Board of Selectmen who serve four-year terms and may be reappointed. The main function of the Board of Ethics is to uphold the Town's Code of Ethics and Charter (printed on the town website under 'Ordinances'), as well as state statutes concerning local boards of ethics.

We included a "frequently asked questions" section under Board of Ethics on the town's webpage. The Board receives complaints and requests for opinions using forms available on the town website. Complaints concern a possible violation of the Code of Ethics or Town Charter.

The main concerns are conflicts of interest, whereby an elected official, town employee or elected or appointed member of a board or commission may have acted in his or her own interests, and not in the best interests of the town. Requests for opinions are generally submitted by an employee or member of a board or commission seeking advice on whether a specific future action would be appropriate. An example might be whether a person could receive a stipend as a coach for the high school and sit on the Board of Finance.

Most of our meetings occur in public session, including requests for opinions, but by state statute, we must go into executive session to conduct a probable cause investigation of a complaint. If we find the complaint has merit, we immediately release all information and schedule a public hearing. If we find the complaint has no merit, the matter ends and remains confidential.

We meet only if we have business to conduct and have had little business to conduct in the past 5 years. All written correspondence concerning the Board of Ethics should be sent to The Town Clerk's Office, Town of Brookfield, cc: Board of Ethics members Christine Hand and James Sullivan.

BROOKFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

Robert Belden, Jr.

In late 2019, just prior to the pandemic, the schools had announced a rise in the total school accountability index. Brookfield advanced from a 14th place ranking in 2018 to a top three placement in 2019, when compared to the other 20 comparable Connecticut towns in District Reference Group B (DRG B). Furthermore, we ranked 22 out of the total 200 school districts on the 2019 CT Report Card. For the past three years, 2019, 2020 and 2021, Brookfield High School has been recognized by US News and World Reports as one of the top high schools in the country.

We had been very focused on curriculum, instruction, and professional learning, had established financial and regulatory control of both the budget and school facilities improvements, enhanced our technology infrastructure, instituted social and emotional learning PreK-12, and had secured financial support for the construction of the new PreK-5 Candlewood Lake Elementary School.

The pandemic, while extremely disruptive and challenging, served as a catalyst for instructional innovation in our district. The demands for learning during unprecedented times forced the district, along with its families, to learn how to effectively employ remote technology to best continue the education of our students. Many of the platforms, devices and approaches we initiated during the window of hybrid and remote instruction are commonplace today as effective and engaging practices throughout our schools.

The pandemic may have slowed us down, but it did not stop us from building upon the past several years of curriculum and instruction work that has led to enhanced student learning. We remain engaged in a four-phase curriculum development process. Students are developing the skills articulated in our Board of Education adopted, Portrait of a Graduate and vision for the self-navigating learner. New courses at Brookfield High School in STEM and Humanities, along with the plan for a senior experience are all well underway. The professional development in which our faculty has engaged has built their capacity and skills necessary to implement our local, standards-aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessments. This work could not be accomplished without the support of Brookfield citizens and our Board of Education.

Our curriculum design includes real-world, relevant context that affords all students the opportunity to apply their new learning and develop skills as critical and creative thinkers, communicators, collaborators, and change makers, as articulated in our Portrait of a Graduate.

We've used ARPESSER funding to launch our long-standing goal for job-embedded professional learning and "just in time," immediate feedback for our faculty in the form of instructional coaches and a technology integration specialist position. For the 2021-2022 school year, we launched our coaching model, and thus far, anecdotal feedback is impressive as teachers report continued learn

ing. We've instituted Social and Emotional tools and programming for our students and staff in the form of Yale's RULER approach, trauma informed instruction, and enhanced training for communication competence for front-facing staff to support family engagement.

Both WMS and BHS faculty have received brand new laptops in recent years, and we plan to fulfill our replacement cycle by providing our elementary teachers with new devices over the coming years. Our technology director and technology integration specialist have been instrumental in developing the capacity of faculty to integrate and leverage digital tools into curriculum and instruction to engage our learners. To accommodate all this mobile learning, we've enhanced internet capacity at our schools. Our technology department has updated infrastructure by doubling the bandwidth of our schools to cover the increased device usage and reliability of service.

We invested in 15 new presentation stations at BHS and are looking forward to completing this project at WMS in the coming year. Once Candlewood Lake Elementary School is completed, every BPS classroom will be equipped with a presentation station to enhance interactive instruction and student engagement. We've also increased the number of personal devices to expand the availability of one-to-one technology for our younger learners. The district will continue to make strides in the integration of technology through investment in infrastructure, digital learning platforms, and one-to-one devices. We'll continue to expand our current one-to-one device program to include Grades K -7.



It's critical that we acknowledge our struggles. Our recent Math and ELA student performance data, along with an increase in referrals for social services, reflect a growing number of students in need of academic and social/emotional support. Our experience in Brookfield is in alignment with regional and national trends, as lingering stress resulting from the pandemic has had a residual impact on families and schools.

To address student needs, we must plan for additional support, which includes academic and social/emotional intervention. While we used ARPESSER funding for instructional coaches, summer school and tutors to support these students' needs, we remain laser-focused on targeted investments which are aligned with our Strategic Plan and our students' needs. Specifically, we've adopted a budget for next year that includes the following: at Huckleberry Hill - Add a Math Interventionist; at Center School - Add para educators in each Kindergarten classroom; phase in financial planning to the operating budget of an instructional coach; add a Bilingual teacher to support native Spanish speakers (legislative mandate); increase time for secretaries to support the administration to engage with families during the summer months; increase the FTEs of both Art and Music teachers at Center School to ensure our students have opportunities with the arts and to prepare for the transition to Candlewood Lake Elementary School; add extracurricular opportunities in the form of clubs and athletics.

We plan to engage in Strategic Planning to build upon our existing plan for the bright future of the Brookfield Public Schools. Despite the pandemic, our students are striving toward the skills articulated in our Portrait of a Graduate and vision for the self-navigating learner.



Finally, we are thrilled that we are to begin the phased-in move from Huckleberry Hill to Candlewood Lake in December of 2022 and will fully occupy the new school by August of 2023 with all students from Center School, Huckleberry and our fifth graders from WMS.

With CLES construction and its move-in plans thoughtfully articulated, it's time to initiate a building conditions study for both Whisconier Middle School and Brookfield High School to ensure optimal school facilities for all our students PreK-12. Again, this work could not be accomplished without the support of Brookfield citizens, dedicated faculty, staff and administration and our Board of Education

BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Demy Parpana

The scope of work for the Building Department is to enforce Sections 29-252a and 29-253 of the State of Connecticut Building Codes. Some of the responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Receiving applications, reviewing construction documents and issuing permits for the erection, and alteration, demolition and moving of buildings and structures; inspecting the premises for which such permits have been issued; and enforcing compliance with the provisions of the code;
- ◆ Performing all the required inspections or accepting reports of inspection by approved agencies or individuals., issuing all necessary certificates, notices, or orders to ensure compliance with building codes, and remaining on call 24/7 during emergency operations.

For the past 3 years, we've had an operating budget of \$250K. We collected over \$500K building permit fees for each year, issued an average of 1,300 building permits and performed 2,300 inspections per year.

Ongoing construction includes a \$7M project at 802-806 Federal Road; a \$17M project at 887 Federal Road (new commercial space with apartments above); 37 Old Rte. 7 (12 townhouse units); and a \$1.3M project at 138 Federal Road (Dairy Queen).



Proposed projects include 701 Federal Road (commercial with 16 apartments); an \$11M grocery store at 731 Federal Road; a property at 984 Federal Road (no application yet), 854 -874 Federal Road (Enclave apartments), 101 Laurel Hill (5 buildings with 72 apartments); 857A Federal Road (apartments and retail); 763-777 Federal Road (Renaissance - 120 apartments).

CANDLEWOOD LAKE AUTHORITY

Marianne Gaffey

The CLA spent 2020/2021 learning, planning, preparing and then implementing changes to better deal with the current recreational and environmental state of Candlewood Lake. Those changes came in the form of new programs, strategies, processes, equipment, staff, and leadership.

The lake continues to change, both recreationally and environmentally, though we've seen some rapid changes in recent years. Recreational pressures on the lake have grown, a situation that rose to unforeseen levels due to Covid's impact on outdoor recreation. With more boaters and more visitors, the environmental impacts on the lake are visible in sightings of zebra mussels in the lake in 2020 and the threat of additional invasive species, along with the erosion of our shorelines due to increased and changing boating habits.

Marine Patrol: A new Patrol Chief (Nick Mellas) was appointed for the 2021 season and the CLA purchased its first purpose-built aluminum Patrol boat with the assistance of a \$100,000 donation from First Light. With the additional boat, the CLA was able to expand the number of Marine Patrol boats and shifts on the lake, including late night coverage to address late evening issues. In addition, the CLA utilized PWCs to focus on problems around the islands and other popular gathering spots, which greatly reduced the issues of overcrowding and safety for swimmers in these areas.



Water Quality and Ecology: In May 2020, a diver discovered a single zebra mussel and the CLA responded by recruiting divers to inspect additional areas of the lake. While no additional mussels were found at that time, in the Fall, several mussels were discovered on a dock. An extensive search for additional mussels was done with the CLA, volunteers, students from WestConn and First Light. As a result of identifying 70 single (but non-colonized) mussels, the CLA responded in a multipronged effort. The CLA applied for and received a grant from DEEP to launch the Lake Steward Program in 2021, with voluntary invasive species inspections rotating between all seven major public launches on the lake during weekends and holidays. The CLA also engaged in a formal program with Dr. Wong at WestConn to test water samples for evidence of zebra mussel DNA. None of the samples returned positive results. The CLA also doubled water quality monitoring to provide data to further inform CLA's management recommendations for the lake.



Moving Forward: Our second Silver Ships Patrol Boat is scheduled to be delivered Spring/Summer of 2022 which will allow us to increase our presence on the Lake to proactively address noise issues, safety violations and island overcrowding. We plan to expand our PWC usage to eliminate the need for a 4th patrol boat. We've applied for a DEEP grant to expand our Lake Stewards program at the launches while we increase water quality testing and develop a comprehensive Lake Management Plan. We continue to work closely with our funding municipalities, First Light and DEEP and leverage our new website and social media platforms to involve and educate the users of the Lake.



The CLA strives to be a good steward of the funding from our municipalities and has worked hard to respond to the rising demands on our lake, while decreasing our funding request for 2022-2023 by 7 percent. In addition, we've reevaluated our long-term capital needs and reduced the need for one patrol boat (by utilizing PWCs) and delayed the timing of the new science boat.

CAPITAL COMMITTEE

Ricky Ramos

The Capital Committee was formed as a "best practice" in September 2021 to assist in determining priority and funding of Brookfield's capital projects during the annual budget cycle and for Brookfield's 10 year capital plan as provided by the town's department heads. Goals of the committee will be to ease away from borrowing and raise the threshold on current (cash) capital spend, as well as implementing strong cash reserves for recurring capital items.

COMMISSION ON AGING

Betsy McIlvane

The Commission on Aging was formed in 1976 to enhance the lives of present and future generations of our town's older citizens. The commission proposes and evaluates programs and services and informs and assists the town in the development, initiation, coordination and implementation of programs and services for older citizens.

Covid-19 hit hardest at seniors and the COA slowed and ceased programs. We canceled in-person seminars and a planned health fair. Our most visible program - FISH rides for seniors to medical appointments - stopped on its own as seniors (and drivers) stayed home and doctors preferred telemedicine. The FISH program is ramping back to pre-Covid levels, and a monthly free lunch delivery program continues with the Knights of Columbus.

Our plans include a continuing partnership with the Senior Center, Social Services and Brooks Quarry housing, including financial support in the Senior Center budget. We need to consider further programs - increased transportation services and some form of handyman support.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION (BCC)

Jeffrey Bronn

The Brookfield Conservation Commission meets once each month and consists of five regular members and three alternates. The primary responsibility of the BCC is managing the open space properties of the town and maintaining a balance between the public enjoyment of those lands and the preservation of natural habitats. In addition, the commission manages three rental homes that are on the open space properties.

The BCC hosts several events each year aimed at educating the public about local preservation efforts. In April 2021, the BCC hosted an Earth Day event in which the public was invited to plant apple trees at Gurski Farm Open Space. In May 2021, the BCC hosted a "No Mow May" event in which participants pledged to not mow a section of their yards throughout the entire month of May with the goal of creating habitats for local pollinators. In September 2021, the BCC hosted a Trails Day event which was an educational walk along the Greenway. Several local preservation organizations set up tables and tents to share information with the public.

Following the lead of the popular New Milford Barn Quilt Trail, the BCC teamed with members of the Brookfield Arts Commission to design and paint Brookfield's first-ever barn quilt. The plan is to hang the completed quilt on the barn at the Erickson Farm Open Space in 2022.

A major focus and challenge of the BCC over the past few years is the management of invasive plant species on several of our properties. The open fields at Happy Landings and Erickson Farm are reported to have a high population of spotted knapweed, which is highly invasive and is unsuitable for haying. The wooded areas of Williams Park have high populations of Ailanthus (Tree of Heaven) and Norway Maple, which are both highly invasive and take over the habitats of native plants.

Efforts to control these invasives have been futile due to high costs and reluctance in pesticide use, along with the need for labor. Several plans have been proposed to the commission from local plant experts and master gardeners to control the invasives. These plans are labor intensive and time consuming and can conflict with public opinion on preserving habitats, especially for pollinators. For example, one way to control knapweed in open fields is to mow it several times each year, but doing so will also disturb other flora that serve as a habitat for bees, butterflies, and ground-nesting birds.

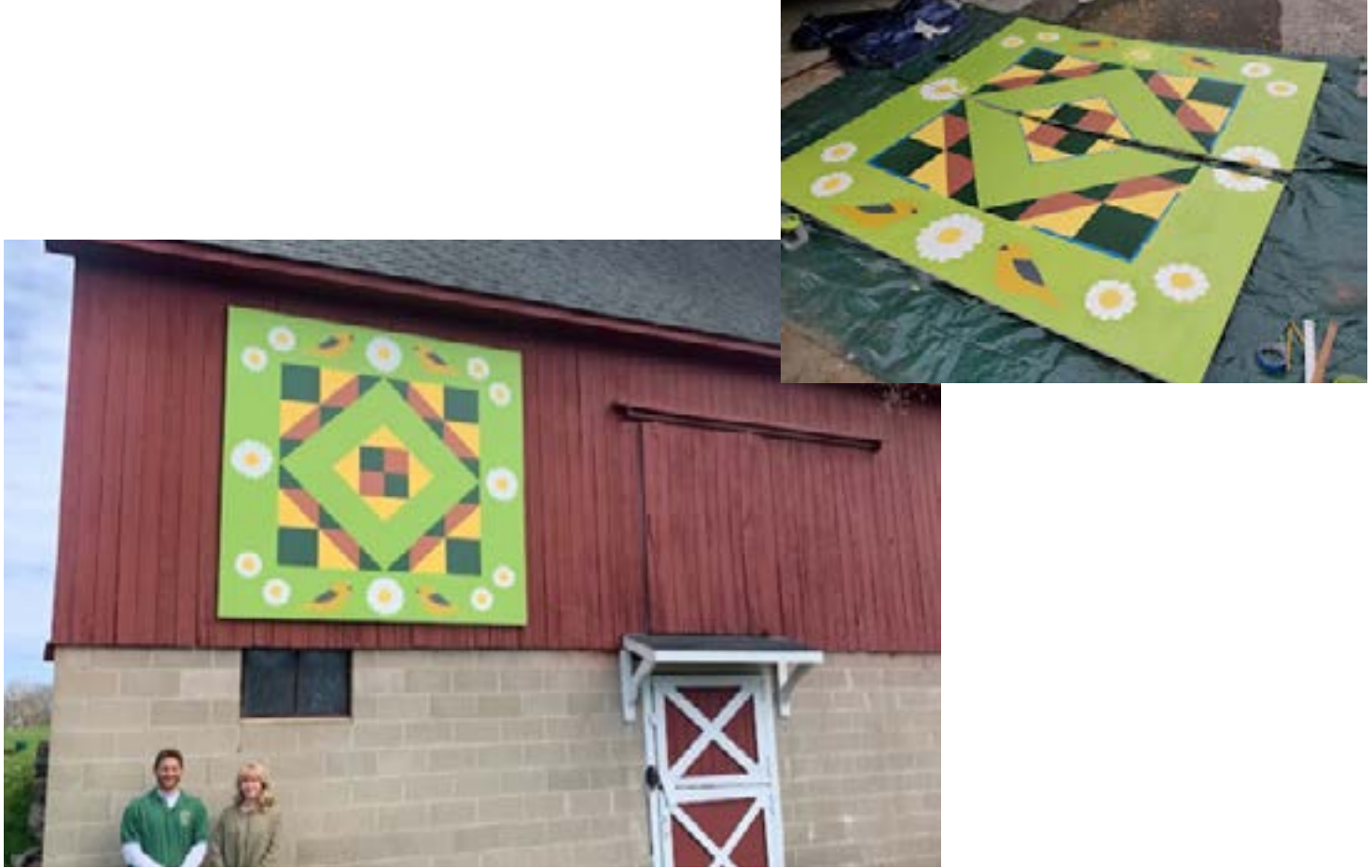


In 2022, the BCC plans to begin eradicating invasive species. The commission plans to hire an expert from Northwest CT Land Conservancy to survey our open spaces and provide an accurate inventory of the invasives and how best to mitigate the situation. The commission plans to experiment at Erickson Farm Open Space by mowing a small section of existing knapweed, while at the same time creating a pollinator garden on the site to compensate for any lost habitat. The commission continuously aims to educate and involve the public in local conservation.

The BCC is planning several public events that include Earth Day, No Mow May, and a Trails Day event similar to what was held in previous years, but with the hope of increasing public participation. We further aim to turn over the management of the rental properties to a paid manager for greater efficiency and efficacy. The commission also plans to continue its management and upkeep of the town's open spaces, including replacing several kiosks to promote a more aesthetic image for visitors.

One of our greatest challenges is that there are projects and tasks way beyond the time, scope, and labor of a five-volunteer member commission. For example, the management of invasive plants on open spaces will require the use of plant/land experts, equipment, volunteers, workers, funding, and time. Another example requiring the same needs is the restoration of the farmhouse and barns on the Gurski Homestead property.

The BCC has always struggled with getting public participation and involvement. The commission’s advertising and promotional efforts have not been successful and may benefit from the support of other town departments.



Although the BCC manages the town’s open spaces, much of the scheduled maintenance falls on the Parks and Rec and Public Works departments. For example, the Parks and Rec department is responsible for the mowing of the actual walking trails on several of our properties. The Public Works Department performs the brush cutting at Happy Landings each Fall. Although the BCC has held events at the town Greenway, the Greenway is solely managed and maintained by the Parks and Rec Department. The intertwining of responsibilities among town departments has created some public confusion over which department maintains which properties.

Clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of these three departments regarding the management of the open space could allow for greater coordination and efficiency. Although challenges exist for the Brookfield Conservation Commission, the members are very dedicated improving our town’s open spaces.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)

James Fisher

The Brookfield Economic Commission is an advisory board with no specific authority. It seeks to assist in the quality and sustainable growth to meet our community needs. The Commission collaborates with commercial enterprises, civic organizations and the Town’s boards and commissions to help businesses prosper while maintaining our Town’s character.

- Goal #1:** Develop and nurture businesses that will bring a vibrant economy to Brookfield consistent with our values and goals.
- Goal #2:** Participate on Town boards, task forces and organizations that work to improve the Town’s quality of life.
- Goal #3:** Support the development and success of the Town Center District.
- Goal #4:** Support of the Lower Federal Road Roadway Improvement Project (from BJ’s to Route 133).
- Goal #5:** Recruit and retain EDC members with the skills needed to deliver its vision.

For years, economic development in Brookfield was stagnant (until the last 5 to 10 years). In the 5 years prior to Covid-19, the town had a busy growth spurt, including the Four Corners area (Town Center District or TCD) moving into its streetscape phases, with much needed improvements with sidewalks, curbs, streetlights, and the new 3-story buildings at the four corners. We’ve also seen the start of construction of the new elementary school, Branson Ultrasonic, and the Linden assisted living facility. The EDC had started to schedule plant and facility tours to understand their challenges and see how we might provide additional value to them – a first in Brookfield by the EDC. Covid ended this outreach – we hope to restore it this year.

In the coming year, we’ll see the start and completion of phase 3 of our Streetscape in the TCD. Building 2 and 3 of Brookfield Village will be opened - new residents will move in and commercial businesses will rent the first floors. Several new restaurants have already signed leases. We hope to see construction start on the new supermarket in this area, along with the completion of the Scalzo projects at the southern entrance to the TCD. The Linden will be fully opened, and we expect a ribbon cutting for that, along with Branson. The Amazon supermarket should also be opening - another destination for local shoppers.

The much-needed state traffic improvements will start on lower Federal Road, along with additional turning lanes, sidewalks and bus shelters - huge improvements to a very busy and often dangerous road. Future development in town is severely hampered by the lack of sewer capacity, which also affects previously approved projects and existing businesses.

We hope the projects underway will be completed without too many supply chain disruptions. We must keep current businesses happy and in place, while attracting others to add to our Grand list.

On January 1, 2022, the Economic Development Department was preparing for its third business grand opening in four weeks, working with seven Candlewood Lake Road residents to open the Aquarion water main (being extended from Nabby Road to the new school) and reviewing transmittals from the contractor, who was purchasing items in advance of the start of Streetscape Phase 3 construction in the Spring. The ECD was also meeting with developers about the recently announced sewer moratorium, delays on their CT DOT permit applications and how it would impact future streetscape project work and schedules. Since announcing her resignation in December, Land Use Director Alice Dew started transitioning her affordable housing responsibilities to Greg Dembowski.

In April, construction on Streetscape Phase 3 began - when completed in the Fall, it will connect the sidewalk at the new Dunkin Donuts down both sides of Old Route 7 and terminate at the end of Brookfield Cleaners’ property line on Laurel Hill Rd. This project will also add a small public park on the grassy area in front of Dunkin. At the request of First Selectwoman Carr, a presentation titled “Town Center District – Past, Present and Future” was presented to the Board of Selectman at their February 7 meeting. The presentation listed 9 recommendations that would advance future streetscape projects and a plan to extend the Still River Greenway north toward New Milford. Also discussed was the schedule to complete the Affordable Housing Plan and address the Department of Housing concerns over our Affordable Housing Moratorium application. Beginning in the Spring, roadway improvements will commence on Federal Road from the Old New Milford Rd. intersection to BJ’s, continuing through the summer of 2023. Regular updates will be posted on the town website.



The Economic Development Department continues to provide input to the Boards of Selectmen and Finance, as well as the various Land Use Commissions on grant writing opportunities and other activities to advance the elements in the Strategic Plan. The Department provides input on regional and state goals that have been adopted by the state legislature and the Western Ct Council of Governments, including EV infrastructure, hazard mitigation, storm resilience and sustainability. It also collaborates with planners across the state, Brookfield’s WPCA and Commissioner Boughton’s team to understand how Brookfield can apply for the portion of federal infrastructure funding allocated to CT. With limited human and capital resources, we must focus on those items that bring the most value to Brookfield residents.

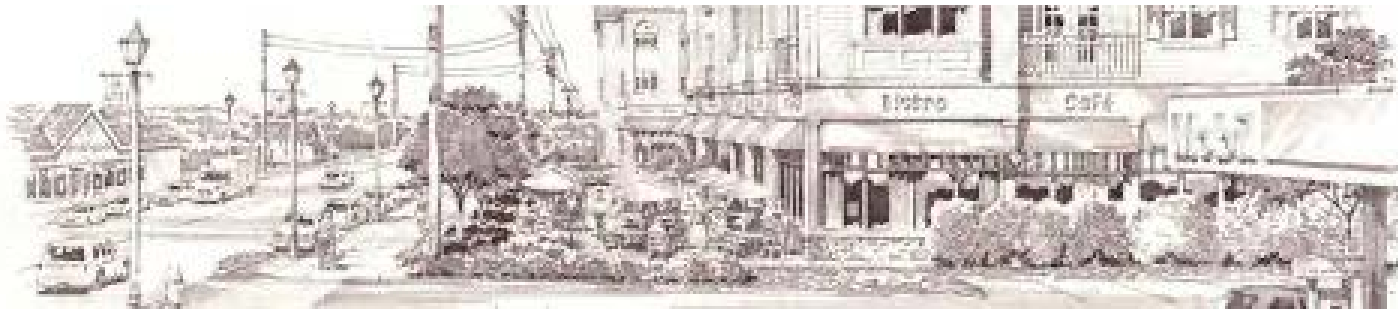
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/ TOWN PLANNER

Greg Dembowski

This year, we’ll continue plans to manage development in the Town Center District and seek funding to overcome some of the transportation and infrastructure limitations in our town and region. Elements include receiving an extension of our affordable housing moratorium, completing the next phase of the streetscape project, constructing a pocket park, creating additional public parking, developing a route to extend the Still River Greenway north to the New Milford border to connect with their multi-use trail and working with the WPCA to increase the town’s sewer capacity.



Most of the funding for these projects will come from federal and state grant awards on applications submitted when the grant solicitations are announced. Other goals include the installation of the town’s first public electric vehicle charging stations and collaborating with planners in our region on infrastructure projects high on WESTCOG’s list to increase economic development.



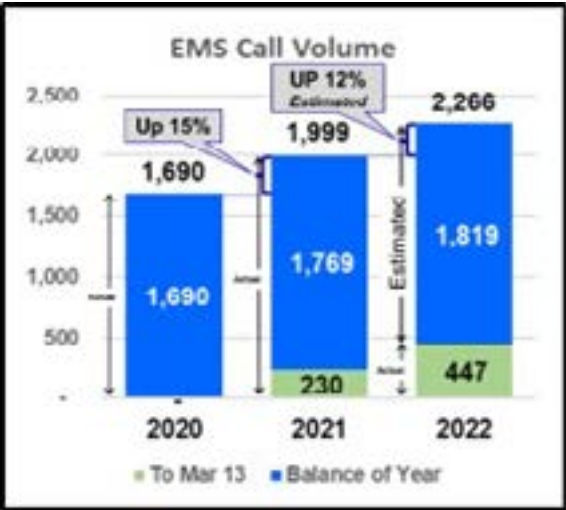
We’ll will achieve these goals by collaborating with the various Land Use commissions and staff, the Boards of Finance and Selectmen and in partnership with WESTCOG staff. Most of the funding will come from grants – we’ll need to demonstrate that whatever funding is needed from the town is aligned with the EDC’s Strategic Plan and the Plan of Conservation and Development. These two documents have set the town’s priorities for the next few years.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Lou Menendez (Retired)

As with fire calls in 2021, we realized a 15% uptick in EMS call volume that we've not seen in recent years and since the Brookfield Volunteer Fire Company (BVFC), started providing EMS services in the 1960's. The increase was not due to Covid-specific calls, but to routine calls we've responded to for many years. Early in 2021, we changed our career EMS staffing model from having an EMS staffing company somewhat randomly assign Paramedics and EMTs to Brookfield, to a hand-picked staff permanently assigned to Brookfield. That results in more consistent and higher quality personnel responding to your EMS 911 calls. They know our roads and places of business, know our volunteer EMS and firefighter membership, and have a vested interest in working in Brookfield. Additionally, we attracted a new Deputy Chief of EMS and EMS Supervisor, who are charged with the day-to-day running of our service. They're also responsible for the development and enforcement of policies and procedures, which define a high level of excellence and professional working environment for our paid staff and volunteers.

We're preparing for the estimated increase in call volume expected this year. We already added additional paid staff to address those times when we have 2 and 3 EMS calls concurrently, requiring 2 and 3 EMS crews and ambulances to respond at the same time. Unlike demands on other departments, we can't put off work for another day – we must respond quickly, as the consequences are significant. We'll monitor call volume and add personnel and ambulances, as needed.



We'll continue to monitor and analyze call volume, types, durations, arrival times, locations, and other data to better understand opportunities for improvement and change. As a growing town with housing population and business growth, we must adjust resources to ensure the same or better response times as currently experienced. In upcoming years, we're anticipating the addition of another ambulance, bringing us from 3 to 4. We already ordered a replacement ambulance for our oldest unit, expecting delivery later this year. We established mutual-aid agreements with surrounding EMS organizations and will continue to augment that as needed. We started conducting EMS education classes at our facilities, to train our own members, and to assist partner agencies, Candlewood Fire Co., and our police department. We're assisting the administrators and instructors at BHS, who are facilitating an EMT certification program, by helping with instruction and providing required ambulance ride-along time and oversight for their students. Additionally, we're assisting the town with their effort to introduce basic medical training to town employees. The combined efforts of these initiatives will reduce the town's financial burden. Lastly, our billing company will continue to hone their process to realize the largest revenue numbers possible, allowing us to reduce our annual budget request to the Town.

FIRE - CENTRAL

Lou Menendez (Retired)

In 2021, the Brookfield Volunteer Fire Company (BVFC) realized a 22% uptick in call volume, its largest single year growth in call volume since the company's founding in 1934. The BVFC was able to make virtually 100% of all calls without needing out-of-town backup services. How? - membership is strong, well trained, capable, and dedicated.

Covid affected us, prompting several changes to operating plans:

- ◆ Coupled with EMS, 30 members/staff contracted Covid-19, but because of vaccinations, quick intervention, isolation and following CDC guidelines, none were seriously affected.
- ◆ Additionally, about 35 more had to isolate because of close contact with persons diagnosed with Covid-19.
- ◆ Covid required us to cancel both the Kids' Day open house and Trunk-or-Treat in 2020 and 2021.
- ◆ The BVFC was able to conduct more than 75 fire truck Drive-By birthday events and 131 Santa Visits, with Santa and Mrs. Claus staying in the fire truck.

The BVFC responded to 31 fire, rescue and pumping details during Storm Ida, September 1st and 2nd. During CT OSHA's Inspection of town departments and the BVFC, the BVFC achieved one of the highest scores ever received for a fire company in the state.



We feel confident that, despite our estimate of an 11% increase in calls for 2022, the BVFC will continue to respond quickly, with appropriate apparatus and personnel, to address any emergency call or major event that occurs. We're one of the few volunteer fire companies that does not have a membership problem. Why? - because of the reputation earned by providing a well-managed, well-trained, well-equipped, and welcoming company environment for prospective members.

We'll maintain the high level of drills and training that our members received in 2021, completing 9,657 hours. Aside from our members, our trucks and equipment are the next most important thing when responding to fire, rescue, and major event calls. To ensure appropriate numbers of personnel and apparatus are in place for any given call, we have mutual-aid agreements with surrounding towns, should we have an event that requires more resources than we have. We've budgeted appropriate amounts to address the purchase of a new engine, replacing its 20-year predecessor, maintenance, repair and replacement of exiting equipment and the purchase of new, more technically advanced equipment. We're replacing or adding 5 new, command and utility vehicles in 2022 (SUVs and pickups). Beginning in 2021, we began billing for fire and rescue calls that are covered by insurance. We've budgeted \$25,000 for the upcoming budget year, doubling our estimate from the previous year – allowing us to offset budget expenses.

FIRE MARSHAL

Jason DeSousa & Mike Connors

As the community navigates its way through the end stages of, or into other stages of the Covid-19 pandemic; Community Risk Reduction, life safety and asset protection remain the top priority for the Brookfield Fire Marshal's Office. As always, our office will work to maintain our high standards and level of commitment to the town and its visitors while working with the community, understanding that the pandemic and other factors have impacted each of us in different ways.

Currently the State of Connecticut has adopted the 2018 State Fire Safety Code and the 2018 Connecticut State Fire Prevention Code. The state intends to adopt the 2022 Connecticut State Fire Safety Code and the 2022 State Fire Prevention Code in October 2022. The various codes and standards referenced by the above are available at the Office of the State Fire Marshal and the Department of Administrative Services website.

Please bear in mind the state modifies the referenced documents in both the Fire Safety and Fire Prevention Codes. Additionally, there's a modification process, from the adopted codes, in which the fire marshal's office may be able to assist, as these must be presented to the state for consideration.

The Brookfield Fire Marshals' Office asks for the community's cooperation as we strive to maintain compliance with the inspection schedule set by occupancy type which are documented in the Connecticut State Fire Safety Code. Understandably, there has been some hesitation and concern because of the pandemic, and we understand many of these have had impacts on businesses, venues and in some cases, residences, but please keep up to date on the fire suppression, notification systems and any other feature that assist in fire and life safety, to include but not limited to means of egress, hallways, lighting, and others that are installed. This includes all inspections, services and updates or modifications to these systems.

Please ensure these systems are regularly checked and maintained.

The Fire Marshal's Office is always available for community events and any training.

Please contact us for assistance with these functions, as we're acquiring several simulation and training aids that may be able to assist the community and businesses.



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Dr. Raymond Sullivan



The Brookfield Health Department entered 2021 during the largest pandemic we've seen since the Spanish Flu in 1917-18. We experienced a milder pandemic in 2009, attributed to the H1N1 Influenza virus, but nowhere nearly as contagious as SARS-CoV2, the virus that causes Covid-19. Hence, the response was far less dramatic and concerning.

The greatest spike in cases occurred in April of 2020, with as many as 116 deaths occurring each day in Connecticut. Most of these were among the elderly. Brookfield experienced 15 deaths in 2020 due to Covid. A smaller spike was seen during the summer of 2020 - the result of social summer gatherings, as a Delta variant made its appearance - but a larger spike was seen on Dec. 26, with as many as 52 cases reported in the state per day. By Nov. 13, Brookfield was experiencing only 28 cases.

By the week ending Jan. 1, Brookfield saw a high of 266 cases, up from 147 the week before. Brookfield was fortunate in seeing only 8 deaths in 2021. A second spike, much more dramatic, occurred just after the holidays, as the Omicron variant became the dominant strain. Fairfield County has experienced the largest number of cases and deaths to date. We were more easily infected early on, due to the proximity to New York. One could almost see the wave of early cases spreading up progressively through the towns along the Route 7 corridor.

During all of this, thanks to over 100 volunteers, Brookfield, under the capable leadership of Maureen Farrell, MPH, our Covid-19 coordinator, was able to provide over 10,000 vaccinations. In addition, our contact tracers reached a total of 2807 homes between May and June alone, to provide advice to known contacts of positive cases. In addition, the department served to provide advice and counsel to the Board of Education, the superintendent of schools, parks and recreation, numerous food establishments, salons and daycare centers, in addition to call-in advice to countless residents. We provided extensive oversight and plan review to numerous food service establishments in transitioning to outdoor dining during the last two years.

We lost our Covid-19 coordinator to a teaching position at WestConn and the last two of our dedicated contact tracers, Celine Teagarden, RN and Barbara Topf-Uziel, RN, over this period. In addition, Nancy Munn, RN, has focused on providing many homebound residents with vaccines. Our dedicated volunteers have provided over 1200 booster doses of Covid vaccines in twice-weekly clinics. As the pressures of Covid slow, we're able to return to the job at hand of promoting, protecting and prevention in Public Health, with increased scrutiny of food service establishments, salons, daycares, septic inspections, private well installations and repairs, etc. We've also taken a lead role in the monitoring of private wells for increases in sodium and chlorides, laid down during winter storms.

Due to the great effort and guidance of our Town Planner, Greg Dembowski, we've been able to bring potable water to Lower Candlewood Road Residents, after having supplied bottled water to some of those residents for almost two years. We've been working with Public Works and all drivers are currently trained in best practices to protect our environment.

As the pressures of Covid slow, we're able to return to the core mission described above. We plan to employ a part-time Public Health Nurse in outreach activities to the homebound, the needy and the poor of our town, to provide monitoring of health and healthy living advice, since Brookfield is underserved by a Visiting Nurse Association. We'll also need closer monitoring of some of our most vulnerable and environmentally sensitive areas of town – e.g., monitoring Candlewood Lake and Lake Lillinonah for contaminants; our beach areas for bacterial and blue-green algae contamination, fertilizer runoff and septic contamination.

In addition, we've learned a great deal about advance planning for the potential of another pandemic (or the continuation or resurgence of the present one) and will put those lessons to good use in the future.

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Jacqueline Salame

Formation of the Historic District & the Historic District Commission: Due to the importance of the properties within the historical context of the state and the overall development of the town, in 1973, the State of Connecticut and the Town of Brookfield officially designated the Brookfield Historic District No. 1 and appointed members to the Brookfield Historic District Commission. All properties were also listed on the CT State Register of Historic Places, some as early as 1966. Additionally, in 1991, the contributing historic properties, within the local historic district, were designated as a National Register Historic District, by the U.S. Department of the Interior, because of their importance in the settlement of our country.

Governance: The Brookfield Historic District Commission is governed by the CT State Statutes, Chapter 96a, Section 7-147 and U.S. Department of the Interior, and manages 63 properties.

According to state statute, the intent of the Commission is to “promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places associated with the history of or indicative of a period or style of architecture of the municipality, of the state or of the nation.”

Accordingly, the mission of the Commission is to preserve the unique historic character of the District, and to assist and advise property owners about appropriate alterations to the exterior of properties located within the boundaries of the Historic District.

The Commission uses the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties to determine the appropriateness of any proposed alteration to a property located in the Historic District. They promote historic preservation best practices that will help to protect our nation's irreplaceable cultural resources. Information on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties is available on the National Park Service website at www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm.

Process: A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Application is submitted to the HDC by property owners within the historic district; a public hearing is posted; the HDC follows the same process as all other Land Use Commissions. The Commission considers the historical and architectural value and significance, architectural style, scale, design, arrangement and the relationship to the style and features of other buildings and structures in the immediate neighborhood. The Commission will also consider details such as the type, style, texture and materials of roofing, siding, windows, doors, light fixtures, signs, above ground utility structures and site features.

Current & Future Goals

- ◆ Designation of the Brookfield Craft Center as Historic District No. 2
- ◆ Recognition as part of the Land Use Office (i.e., listed as such on applications and documents; better coordination with properties under the Demolition Ordinance, etc.)
- ◆ Coordination, communication and support across all Land Use Commissions and other town government departments (i.e., Selectman, Finance, etc.)
- ◆ New Historic District Signs put in place; as HDC members we've taken care of the maintenance of our signs; this should be part of the town maintenance.
- ◆ Four check boxes added to Assessor's Card designating whether properties are: historic properties; on the State Register and/or National Register; within the Local Historic District. When applications are submitted to Land Use and the Assessor's Card is required as an attachment, then no mistakes should be made as to the historic status of the property.
- ◆ Have portions of the sidewalks, on Route 25, uncovered. Areas of the sidewalk are in disrepair and other sections are buried under years of dirt pile up. The sidewalk runs along Route 25 all the way up Long Meadow Hill Rd to BHS and is a great asset to Brookfield Center. The Commission has previously worked on clearing and repairing the sidewalk with the State of CT and got some traction, but it would have been helpful to have support and help from the Town.
- ◆ Historic District Walking Tours for the community; these were done previously and were very successful.
- ◆ Continue work to preserve the integrity of the town's historic resources - both within and outside of the Historic District; resources that are vital to the past, the present and the future development of the town of Brookfield, as well as important assets to the Brookfield community.

HISTORIC PROPERTY STUDY AD-HOC COMMITTEE

Jacqueline Salame

The Brookfield Ad Hoc Study Committee was appointed to create a report that outlines the historic significance of the Brookfield Craft Center, on its own and within the larger context of the history and development of the Town of Brookfield.

The Brookfield Craft Center has been listed on the CT State Register of Historic Places, since 1966, in recognition of its importance to the historical development of the State of CT.

The local historic district designation offers assurance that the distinctive architecture and aesthetic value inherent in the unique structures, which make up the Brookfield Craft Center, will remain an important asset to the Brookfield community, today and for future generations.

The committee is currently working on the report and looks forward to the establishment of the Craft Center as Brookfield's Historic District No. 2.



HOUSING AUTHORITY

Amelia Malanaphy

The current Brookfield Housing Authority's mission is to provide decent affordable housing for Elderly or Disabled individuals at Brooks Quarry which is an Independent Living facility in Brookfield CT. This property provides 35 units, 27 of which are studio units and 8 are one bedroom units, four of which are ADA compliant.

The Brookfield Housing Authority has been able to secure grants from the Connecticut Department of Housing to replace the site sewer system in 2017 and in 2021 to repave and upgrade all walkways to be ADA compliant. The Housing Authority has recently appointed three new Commissioners and is in transition of responsibilities from the previous leadership.

It's been extremely challenging securing Capital Needs Funding from the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) and the Connecticut Department of Housing (DOH). The Brooks Quarry units are in dire need of updates, as well as critical infrastructure improvements to the potable water systems.

The Brookfield Housing Authority will focus their efforts on developing alternative funding options for Brooks Quarry, such as Small City Grants, Tax Credits, Foundations and Philanthropic Organizations, through the auspices of the Friends of Brooks Quarry, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. We'll continue to pursue Capital Needs Funding from CHFA and DOH.

The Brookfield Housing Authority engaged a Property Management firm in 2016 to manage the operational matters under the oversight of the BHA. This was implemented due to the lack of background, education and knowledge of the myriad of rules and regulations that impact a State Supported Housing Portfolio project. The property management firm has the knowledge and experience to manage the property within the state regulatory requirements, thereby avoiding the potential for legal actions against the BHA and the Town of Brookfield.

The BHS will continue to work with a Property Management firm to ensure the maintenance and services we provide to this community are managed effectively and by professionals who understand the unique needs requirements of Brooks Quarry. This will allow the BHS commission to focus on developing additional housing opportunities for Elderly residents in Brookfield.

Alternative options, such as Congregate Housing and/or new Independent Housing and/or some degree of Supported Living Housing, will be researched to determine if they're viable options.



Providing low-income, safe and affordable housing for the Elderly will require a partnership with the Town of Brookfield, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, the Connecticut Department of Housing, Commercial Banks and a Development Consultant. The proposal must be financially viable, sustainable for the long-term and embraced by the community.

The Brookfield Housing Authority Commissioners will collaborate with experts and resources in our Brookfield Town governmental body (Board of Selectman, Board of Finance, Zoning, and others) to build a viable proposal that will support the long-term needs for affordable and safe housing for the Elderly in Brookfield.

HOUSATONIC RESOURCES RECOVERY AUTHORITY (HARRA)

The Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority is pleased to share that the grand prize winner of the 2022 recycling billboard contest is Alvina Bilal, 9th grader at Brookfield High School.

Congratulations to Alvina. Her billboard will be displayed on 20 Hart buses from May to June.

Congratulations to the other impressive Brookfield regional winners. There were a total of eleven Brookfield students who topped the 2022 contest out of 1300 entries. Check out their work at www.HARRA.org.



In other HARRA news, we're pleased to share the new recycling app for Connecticut residents. Know what's IN and What's OUT when it comes to recycling right. Download the RecycleCT app from Google Play or the Apple Store. Links to the downloads are located on our home page. And don't miss any upcoming household hazardous waste events scheduled throughout the year in your area.

Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle www.HARRA.org

HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Fern Smenyak

In the Town's Human Resource Department, we take a strategic approach to the effective and efficient management of people. Our primary goal is to maximize employee performance by providing a safe and positive environment.

We're responsible for overseeing employee benefits, recruitment, training, and development. We also provide organizational practices with requirements arising from collective bargaining and governmental laws.

This department has had to overcome many obstacles over the last few years due to Covid. It's been a challenge to maintain employee morale and trust, as well as keeping employees safe, but the town has accomplished this. By maintaining great communication between all our emergency services departments, we've successfully turned the corner and look forward to a new normal.

Keeping employees engaged, enthused and productive is one of HR's most valuable roles and often, one of its superpowers. When employees feel that their physical and emotional wellbeing is a priority, they're more engaged and happier.

Highly engaged teams produce substantially better outcomes - they treat residents and customers better and are more likely to remain employed with the Town. Statistically, engaged employees are also healthier and happier.

The HR Department will continue to work with the employees to maintain and monitor morale and keep on top of any issues or concerns. We'll streamline work responsibilities by our employees' talents and skills; allow professional development opportunities and recognize employee achievements with genuine appreciation; while allowing feedback and suggestions and most importantly, listening to our employees.

INLAND-WETLANDS COMMISSION

Sharon Fox

The Town of Brookfield Inland Wetlands Commission operates under the State of Connecticut Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Legislation, first passed in 1972. The Commission Members are volunteers and appointed by the Selectman. The Commission structure is 5 Regular members, and 3 alternates. There are currently 5 members on the Commission, supported by the Town of Brookfield Wetlands Enforcement Officer and the Land Use Staff.

The commission has the responsibility to review and make determinations to approve or deny any activity or work or development (residential or commercial) that would be done on wetlands, vernal pools, streams, ponds, rivers, or lakes or in the designated Upland Review Area (commonly known as Buffer Areas) relying on the State and the Town's published regulations.

In addition to the many recent residential applications for projects like tree cutting, swimming pools, septic remediations and new construction, the Commission recently reviewed the applications for the Greenway, for the School Project and a number of developments in the Four Corners area. Frequently, applications require consideration not just for impacts on wetlands, water courses, and the animals and plants that inhabit wetlands, but also storm water management.

In addition to the well-known Candlewood Lake, Lake Lillinonah, and Still River, Brookfield has scores of brooks and small streams, vernal pools, ponds and wetland areas. The conditions range from many that are undisturbed to wetlands that have been previously filled and tree cover removed, infested by invasive species, to brooks that are impounded (like the East and West Brook) to wetlands contaminated by earlier industrial development and pollutants, such as lawn fertilizers and road runoff.

The Commissioners have expressed in recent meetings that as the climate warms and recent storms seem to bring more rain in shorter periods, this creates new concerns for wetlands and watercourse health. The Commission has noted that although much of Brookfield is developed, there are many areas that are not, some of which have undisturbed wetlands on them. The history in the Commission's minutes would include that although many developers and landowners in Brookfield are very aware of the wetlands on their properties, the best practices to preserve their wetlands and their responsibilities per the Town and State regulations, some are not.

All the above will require the current and future commissioners, plus all citizens of Brookfield to do their due diligence and give consideration to maintain the water quality we have, the wetland's animal and plant habitats and the natural beauty of Brookfield into the future.

LAKE LILLINONAH AUTHORITY

Mauro Digirolamo

The Lake Lillinonah Authority is funded by the towns of Bridgewater, Brookfield, New Milford, Newtown, Southbury and Roxbury to oversee the environmental, safety and recreational needs of Lake Lillinonah. The Authority meets those needs primarily through the operation of its Marine Patrol during the warm weather recreational season, monitoring and, to the extent possible, responsibly ameliorating invasive species and stocking fish. The Authority also maintains a productive working relationship with the lake owner, First Light Power, and with Friends of the Lake.

The Authority consists of three volunteer members from each town. Meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. with meeting agendas and minutes posted regularly on the LLA website. The Authority may be contacted through its website www.lakelillinonahauthority.org.

LLA Marine Patrol: The LLA Marine Patrol maintains 3 patrol vessels at its facility and dock located on the shoreline of Lake Lillinonah in Brookfield in the Lillinonah Woods open space. In 2021, the Marine Patrol consisted of 11 active Marine Patrol Officers and 9 active Patrol Assistants. Staffing should remain at the same level in 2022. During 2021, Lake Lillinonah continued to see high demand on its recreational resources from a diverse group of users from kayakers and rowers to fisherman and recreational boaters.

While there were many days of overcrowding and peak lake use in 2021, there was a decrease in the illegal use (principally prohibited overnight camping) of shoreline property. This was primarily due to the LLA Marine Patrol's continued exemplary work with local Police Departments and DEEP ENCON to curb and control this behavior, despite the difficulties of limited access, limited resources, and the remote location of some of the unauthorized campsites. A total of 2218 patrol-hours were performed in 2021 with 340 vessel contacts, which resulted in 1 infraction, 119 verbal, and 5 written warnings. There were 80 inspections, and 54 requests to vacate due to trespass and equipment violations.

Significantly, the Patrol conducted 114 documented boater assists, investigated two sinking vessels, located a couple of missing free-floating vessels, waterskies and a wakeboard. In addition, Patrol aided with 5 medical calls and assisted DEEP- CT, State Police, Southbury, Bridgewater, Newtown, and Brookfield Police several times for various general service needs. The Patrol also conducted numerous debris removal operations to ensure safe boating. The largest portion of the LLA budget is devoted to the Patrol, as it is the most vital component of our mission. The outstanding staff of Marine Patrol Officers and Marine Patrol Assistants continued to provide an excellent level of service throughout the entire 2021 season. It's anticipated that the user demand on Lake Lillinonah for the 2022 season will match that of 2021 and likely increase. The Marine Patrol will meet that demand, with the same high level of professionalism and efficiency as in past years.

Invasive Species Monitoring and Amelioration: The LLA continues to evaluate all methods of invasive species control in our lake. We thank and continue to depend on organizations such as Friends of the Lake for their independent efforts, and on our supporting towns for the financial support to stay ahead of the curve. The LLA also actively looks for funding from other sources and has submitted a grant application to the State DEEP's Aquatic Invasive Species Grant program.

The prevalent invasive species in Lake Lillinonah are Eurasian Milfoil, Curly leaf Pondweed, Water Chestnut, and Zebra Mussels. In 2021, the Lake Lillinonah watershed experienced some of the highest Spring and Summer rainfall totals on record. The high inflow conditions early in the season were not favorable for the establishment of Zebra Mussels and other invasive species. However, Zebra Mussels showed a high level of infestation towards the end of the season. Given the prevalence of Zebra Mussels throughout the state and their ability to be transported between lakes by trailered boats, once established in a lake, Zebra Mussels are unlikely to be eradicated. Lake Lillinonah always experiences seasonal algae blooms.

However, in 2021, with the water being replaced frequently due in part to the high inflows and overall lower water temperatures throughout the year, 2021 saw reduced Algae Blooms in the lake. The LLA continues to monitor improvements to the main point source polluters to our watershed, such as the Danbury and Pittsfield, MA sewer treatment plant upgrades. These improvements are scheduled for completion within the next two years. It's noteworthy that significant progress has been made on the Danbury Sewer Treatment Plant upgrade.

While Lake Lillinonah continued to have a strong population of milfoil in the usual areas in 2021, the frequent high rainfall and increased inflows, which resulted in several water level draw down events, stunted milfoil populations in many areas. Since milfoil is present throughout the lake, lake-wide amelioration is impractical and cost prohibitive. Therefore, milfoil management is done in limited areas, principally by private shoreline communities. The LLA is supportive of non-chemical management practices for milfoil control and continues to closely monitor the DEEP permitting process for herbicide applications by private parties. However, LLA does devote a significant portion of its annual budget to the manual removal of Water Chestnut and Curly Leaf Pondweed, which are currently confined to areas of Lake Lillinonah above and just below the Gorge. However, there's a massive population of these plants just upstream of Lake Lillinonah that continues to seed the lake. The LLA appreciates that our lake neighbors do a lot to assist in the removal of both aggressive species. It's particularly noteworthy that in 2021, Friends of the Lake completed

an amazingly successful campaign, removing Water Chestnut from areas inaccessible to traditional removal craft and equipment. Through our efforts and the strong work of our neighbors, we hope to continue the Lake Lillinonah Community’s generally successful efforts to resist the further establishment, and in fact reduce the population, of these nuisance species. We’re always on the verge of losing the war on these plants and funding these efforts will continue to consume a significant portion of our annual budget.

Fish Stocking: Fishing is one of the most popular recreational activities on Lake Lillinonah. In 2021, there was a significant increase in fishing activity overall, particularly from ice fishermen. In recent years, the lake’s reputation as an outstanding Northern Pike and Tiger Muskie fishery has grown. A relatively small portion of our budget goes to the continued stocking of Tiger Muskie and Northern Pike. In addition, the LLA has in the past, and will continue its efforts in the future, to work with DEEP to issue size and catch limit regulations to promote a responsible and sustainable fishery. LLA continually works to inform and educate fisherman regarding the applicable regulations.

First Light Power: The Lake Lillinonah Authority has an ongoing and productive relationship with the lake owner, First Light Power. First Light is mandated to lower lake levels to mitigate flooding in New Milford when a certain level of precipitation is anticipated. The lowering of water levels in Lake Lillinonah has a significant impact on lake users and particularly shoreline homeowners. It’s vital that the public be informed of such draw downs.

First Light has been and continues to be a cooperative partner informing us of upcoming high and low water levels. The LLA and Friends of the Lake use various methods of communication to notify lake users and neighbors of changing water levels. In addition to water level notifications, the LLA works with First Light on the management and removal of woody and manmade debris in the lake. Sometimes after very high flooding, a large enough amount of such debris will enter the lake to impede recreational activity and then become trapped in certain areas. The amount of debris can be in the hundreds of thousands of yards. Each year during the boating season, First Light regularly sends out crews to monitor and remove the debris. In addition, the LLA Marine Patrol moves and notes the location of particularly hazardous debris for later removal.



Friends of the Lake: The Lake Lillinonah Authority continues to work closely with Friends of the Lake on the various issues that impact Lake Lillinonah. As noted above, water quality and the management of invasive species are the main areas of cooperation and concern. The LLA acknowledges and thanks FOTL for its efforts and continued support of Lake Lillinonah.

In 2022, the Lake Lillinonah Authority will continue its efforts and maintain its commitment to the responsible management of the environmental, safety and recreational needs of Lake Lillinonah and those who use it.

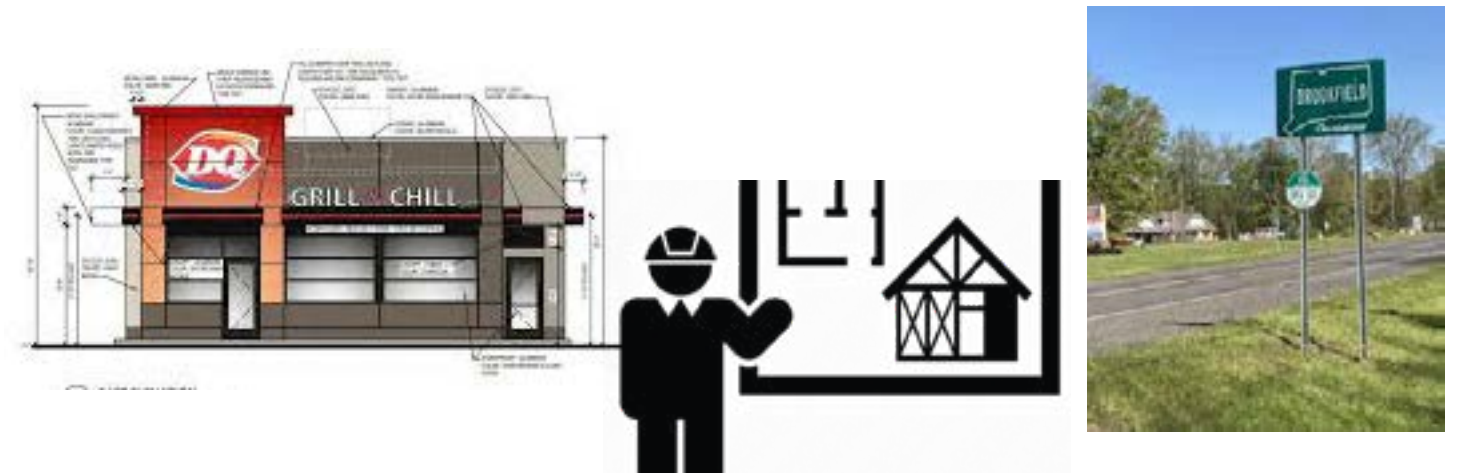
LAND USE

Richelle Hodza

Brookfield’s Land Use Department is comprised of ten separate but interdependent entities. The physical use of land involves Planning, Inland Wetlands, Zoning, Building, Health, Conservation, and in some cases, the Zoning Board of Appeals. Also under the auspices of the Land Use Department are the Fire Marshal, Blight Panel, and the Economic Development Commission.

Nearly all the work done in the Department, as well as the fees it collects, are dictated by state statute. When dealing with raw, or largely undeveloped land, the Planning Commission may be called upon to review and decide on an application for a new subdivision. It also writes the ten-year Plan of Conservation and Development and makes certain recommendations to the Board of Selectmen.

Before the Building Department can issue a permit to build nearly any structure, the Zoning Commission or its designated Zoning Enforcement Officer must issue a permit and, before the Zoning Department can issue a permit, the Inland Wetlands Commission or its agent, the Inland Wetlands Enforcement Officer, must issue its permit. If any building involves the construction of bedrooms, the Health Department and its Registered Sanitarian must issue permits for the subsurface sewage disposal system and can only do so according to the Connecticut Department of Health’s regulations. It makes certain that drinking water, such as provided by a private well, will have enough separation from sources of possible contamination. If construction involves blasting, the Fire Marshal is responsible for issuing a blasting permit.



Many of the officers must return to a site two or three times, before, during, and after construction to certify that whatever was proposed in the application process, was actually built, and according to state and local codes. The Building Inspector must often inspect jobs in the middle of the construction process, before walls are closed or ditches are filled in, for example. The Registered Sanitarian must inspect test pits for water percolation rates before any septic system is built and must return before the leach fields are covered over to certify that they were installed properly. Similarly, the Wetlands and Zoning Officers must often visit a site multiple times to inspect, measure, monitor, and issue final certificates of compliance.

Sometimes, the land use department sees an opportunity to preserve a particularly sensitive or ecologically important tract of land. In this case, the Conservation Commission is charged with making recommendations to the Board of Selectmen to purchase open space for the benefit and enjoyment of the town. It can also apply for grants or raise funds to assist with such purchases.

The Blight Panel is composed of several land use specialists, and it seeks to ensure that residents are free of health hazards owing to neglect, disrepair, or abandonment of buildings. Finally, the Economic Development Commission, guided by the Economic Development Specialist, assists in welcoming new businesses and obtaining grants for various projects that improve commerce and conveniences that help townsfolk thrive.

On a different plane, the Zoning Board of Appeals must deal with the physical use of land when it acts in its quasi-judicial capacity to issue variances or to hear appeals in cases where there was disagreement with a decision on a zoning permit.

The pandemic stretched the Land Use Department, but as its staff is resilient and well-trained, accommodations were made, and work continued. The greatest challenge faced by the department now is one shared by much of the First World: the demands of technology upon non-users. With all land use permitting done online, a great need has arisen for assisting residents and contractors with computerized applications, scanning large documents, and uploading site plans. Many residents cannot log on to the website to begin the process, while others are stymied by the first or second question on the application, which requires a scanner or the ability to use GIS mapping to draw locations of proposed buildings or additions.

What were once simple forms filled out with a pen and delivered or mailed to the office are now monumental exercises in IT skills. The office fields a challenging number of phone calls to walk the caller through an application – some of which begin at “Step 0” - creating an email address. The pandemic created a flurry of applications, as if there were no supply chain problems. The Building Department is the most thinly stretched of all the offices under the Land Use umbrella.

There have been tremendous improvements, particularly with the grant-supported remodeling of the Land Use office with upgraded new cubicles that have given staff their own workspaces, reducing confusion and making the work environment healthier.

Moving forward, the greatest opportunities the department has will be to continue to streamline the OpenGov online applications system and embrace cooperation and cross-training between related offices. Some of the most positive activities underway include obtaining land for preservation, cleaning up brownfield and blighted properties, and moving toward best management practices in the planning and use of land. This will be done by employing low-impact development techniques, focused on making Brookfield a model of intelligent and forward-thinking land use. Careful planning over the next few years - weighing what has been developed, what has been approved for development, and what land remains - will be key to enjoying life in Brookfield.

TOWN LIBRARY

Tracey Wehking

The Brookfield Library has been in operation since 1951, and in its current building and location since 1975, when Brookfield had 9,288 residents. With just over 17,000 residents today, the Brookfield Library continues to serve as the cultural, social, and intellectual center of the community, providing free access to information in diverse formats.

The challenges facing the Brookfield Library continue to be an acute lack of space in a non-ADA compliant building and an inability to purchase sufficient resources due to budget constraints.



Despite the challenges of Covid-19 restrictions and building closures, the library experienced record high attendance at its in-person and virtual programs over the past fiscal year, in addition to record high e-media circulation.

The Board of Trustees, New Library Committee, and Strategic Planning Committee continue to work towards the goal of a new library. They're looking forward soon to a feasibility study to determine how best to repurpose Center Elementary School to include a new library, better able to serve the community through expanded community spaces and emerging technologies.

Our goals for the coming year include returning to in-person programming, expanding our e-media offerings, collaborating with community partners, and continuing our efforts to build a new library. Additionally, we strive to inform the community about the wide variety of services we offer from books and story times, to film conversion and craft classes, to our community-focused art gallery.



PARKS & RECREATION

Mary Knox

The mission of the Brookfield Parks & Recreation Department is to respond to the ever-changing needs of our residents by providing the foundation for enhanced community interaction and enjoyment, and to enhance the quality of life for all ages and abilities by providing healthy and affordable recreation opportunities, emphasizing safe, attractive, and well managed public properties, parks, and school grounds.

Throughout 2020 and 2021, we followed our mission to “respond to the ever-changing needs of our residents.” We continuously reinvented our programming and procedures around our theme of “Creating Community at Your Comfort Level.” We respected that our residents were coming to us on a continuum based on their unique circumstances, thus strove to meet individuals in their comfort zone by offering a variety of participation options. In 2020, we operated the Town Beach on a reservation system, which had not existed before. We offered camps and programs in compliance with all Department of Health and Office of Early Childhood requirements. We were one of only a handful of communities that offered an in-person Summer Concert Series in 2020—complete with a livestream option for those who preferred to watch from home.

As restrictions lifted, we continued to offer programs to meet the needs of our community, while often constrained by lack of indoor space. School buildings—which serve a second function for Parks & Rec and community use after school hours—were understandably closed to outside use for large periods of time in 2020 and 2021. Outdoor spaces were used as much as possible to continue with in-person programming, in addition to virtual programs being offered. As restrictions on building use and cohorting lifted throughout 2021, we resumed much of our typical programming, still acknowledging the continuum of comfort zones, and offering outdoor options, when possible.

The Parks side of our department was also reinventing—including how to accomplish needed tasks throughout periods of staff cohorting or quarantine. The grass still grew, equipment still needed to be maintained and garbage and recycling pails at parks needed to be emptied—among many other regular duties. When schools were in session, additional usage of school grounds by students for mask breaks often coincided with times the Parks Department would typically work in those areas.

Another opportunity for reinvention—when Candlewood Lake Elementary School broke ground in March 2021, Parks needed to adapt to best maintain the existing play areas and develop a plan on how to maintain/remove snow from existing parking lots when most of the area is surrounded by construction fencing. We’ve also needed to allocate additional resources into existing baseball fields, after the loss of the 60’ and 90’ fields at Huckleberry Hill School due to construction. The last two years have allowed us to reinvent in ways we never thought possible. As the saying goes, “Necessity is the mother of invention,” or in our case, reinvention.

In January 2022, we moved forward with a growth mindset; striving to learn and improve, under-

standing that our ‘old’ ways may not serve us well going forward. We continue to examine how our procedures, operating budgets and capital requests reflect our mission and the needs of the community. Our mission guides us to have an “emphasis on safe, attractive and well managed public properties, parks, and school grounds.” In FY23, our operating budget reflects increased costs for services and supplies, as well as the need to allocate funds for additional repairs at various facilities. Pressing needs included in our capital funding requests for FY23 include full funding for tennis court replacement at BHS, funding to address known drainage issues in the BHS baseball and softball outfields and future funding for the replacement of the BHS stadium field and track, slated for Summer 2023.

Reflecting on our mission, we see a unique opportunity to “enhance the quality of life for all ages and abilities by providing healthy and affordable recreation opportunities” in the repurposing of Center School, once vacated. Dating back to the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) in 1977, the need for a community center was noted and in later POCDs in 1990 and 2000, further suggestion given for the community center to include a youth center, community meeting rooms and recreation space. The Brookfield community has continued to grow—from a population of 15,664 in the 2000 Census to a population of 17,528 in the 2020 Census. Repurposing Center School is a conversation for our entire community. We look forward to participating in that process.

We provide “the foundation for enhanced community interaction and enjoyment,” recognizing that involves not only our own programs, events, and department initiatives, but also working in support of projects and events sponsored by other clubs and organizations in Town. Our department recently supported a Boy Scout project, to replace the Still River Greenway gazebo. The project is nearing completion and the Town will benefit for years to come from the collective efforts of many who contributed their time, energy, and funds to the project. The synergy of this project stretched from the Four Corners Business Association, who donated proceeds from their Block Party, to Brookstock, who donated funds collected at an event, to Boy Scout leadership, engineers, and individual donors. Other town departments also contributed expertise: the Building Department, Public Works/Highway Department, and the Finance Department, along with boards and commissions from the Board of Selectmen to the Board of Finance. Our plans often rely on a foundation of inter-departmental and inter-board cooperation and coordination within Town Hall, as well as with outside organizations to benefit Brookfield.

As Brookfield has grown, have resources needed to support that growth kept pace? Through the lens of Parks & Recreation, does the Town have facilities, both indoor and outdoor, to support current usage and projected future growth? Do we have enough baseball and softball fields? Pickle ball courts and tennis courts? Should we have a skate park? Does the community have a need for programming not currently offered? The Parks & Recreation Department last conducted a Community Needs Assessment survey in 2000. The results of that survey have shaped the development of parks/recreation facilities, including the Still River Greenway and Cadigan Park/Town Beach reinvestment projects, as well as recreation programs over the last twenty years. We believe that an updated Needs Assessment will provide our department and Town Administration with reliable data by which to plan for current and future needs.

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Joei Grudzinski

March 2020 - January 2022 brought unprecedented challenges for Parks and Recreation due to Covid-19. Programs and sports leagues were upended, and parks needed new rules. Mary and her staff immediately crafted an actionable plan, revised it continuously as things changed, and created out-of-the-box virtual programs; drive-by adventures; re-vamped camp offerings and activities for all - paying special attention to households trying to cope with kids at home 24/7.

By January 2022, we were adjusting to a steady return to “normal.” It was a herculean effort with the Commission in constant contact and support. One of the biggest continuing challenges is the lack of dedicated space for programs and the loss of a gym and fields due to the new school construction. In January, the Commission continued working with Mary to explore options for the possible use of CES. We continued our sub-committee work on The CT Trails Census project and monitored the (hopeful) approval of grants to study trail extension. We dove into discussions on the director’s budget draft.

We have several initiatives in the planning stages or awaiting capital funds to meet the growing recreational needs of our community. Of high priority, as mentioned above, is the hopeful repurpose of CES into a long-needed recreational facility that will, for the first time, provide dedicated space for many classes, sports programs, and camps serving every member of the Brookfield community.

We’ve seen explosive growth and popularity of our programs and camps over the years and believe we need a facility that will permit us to operate efficiently and meet this growing demand, making Brookfield an ever more attractive place to live.

We drafted estimated operating budgets and a comprehensive plan of how we might repurpose the spaces at CES, both indoor and grounds. This will require a study, a conversation with the community, and approval of an appropriate capital expenditure to achieve this long overdue goal.

We need to address the drainage on the ball fields, currently in our capital request. The Commission will press the town to focus on reserves for maintaining the assets we have - most immediately - turf fields; tennis court resurfacing at BHS; track; Parks Dept’s garage needs. Capital requests have been made for these items. Looking ahead, we requested ARPA dollars to fund an update to our 2000 Needs Assessment.

We have seen significant changes to the town in 20+ years and an update is vital to understand the priorities of residents into the years ahead - and how we meet those priorities in a fiscally responsible way. We’re exploring the possible expansion of the Still River Greenway north to New Milford. Our trail has the 2nd highest use in the state and undoubtedly brings significant economic benefit to our town.

The Commission feels better communication is needed between groups in town. Often different groups have overlapping or complementary needs/goals; we should take advantage of every possible efficiency to achieve these goals, resulting in the best value to the residents of Brookfield. Working together creates a more seamless, cost-effective outcome. There are benefits to sharing resources. An example is shared classroom space at CES. Perhaps all major capital requests, or requests for studies, should be reviewed to see if another group can benefit. We also need to monitor dollars spent to maintain equipment or assets - when that cost starts to encroach on the common sense of replacing it.

Most importantly, one of the best paths to “getting there” is community dialogue. What do the residents support? What do they need? Again, a fresh look at this could save us thousands and help us focus resources where they belong. Lastly, a few Commission-centric initiatives:

In 2014 the Commission completely updated its Mission, Policy, and Goals manual. It’s now more aligned with our current policies and rules. We review it annually to address new additions, such as the beach building and the Greenway. The Town Charter, as it relates to the Commission’s responsibilities, is woefully outdated and should be re-written to reflect our charge more accurately versus that of the Director and her department.

Secondly, the Commission is currently engaged in “succession planning” - how we see our roles and focus changing in the future and how we best assign members to strategic thinking and sub-committee needs when large projects or initiatives require this, or we need to collaborate with another group. A CES subcommittee is a current example.

This commission is an incredible group of tireless volunteers who support our Parks and Recreation staff who in every way, make our community stronger, healthier, more connected, and a very desirable place to live.



PLANNING COMMISSION

Jon Van Hise

The purpose of Planning is to promote and ensure the orderly development of land within the town, which when subdivided, can be used for building purposes without danger to health and safety. This is done in accordance with state, town, and commission regulations. The commission additionally provides and maintains a ten-year Plan of Conservation and Development by which the town can make an orderly transition to accommodate its future needs.

During the past year, subdivision requests were considerably lower than in the years prior to the pandemic, with only one subdivision reviewed and approved. However, there were seven lot line revision requests for potential building lots. In addition, the BOS made seven CT Statue 8-24 requests for municipal improvements, which were reviewed and approved by the commission. They include a new police storage garage, electric vehicle readiness, regional transportation plans, Still River Greenway grant, cell tower, additional open space on Old Bridge Road, Streetscape Phase 6, and pocket park land purchase. The Zoning commission also updated several of its regulations and requested Planning review and comments.

In response to Connecticut State Statue 8-30j, which requires all municipalities to have a five-year plan for affordable housing by July 1, 2022, the commission is currently working closely with the town's land use staff to have the plan ready for review by the BOS in time to meet the state's deadline. The current sewer moratorium must be resolved if we are to implement the plan. This moratorium may effectively restrict subdivision development in the upcoming year. Assuming the local economy remains strong, and our sewer issues are resolved, the Planning Commission looks forward to the return of pre-pandemic subdivision activity.

POLICE COMMISSION

Zoltan Nanassy

The Brookfield Police Commission consist of five resident electors and three alternate members who are appointed by the Board of Selectman. The commission exists to provide civil oversight managing and controlling the Police Department. Duties, alongside command staff, include general management and supervision of the Police Department in managing the officers, staff property, and equipment. These powers include appointments and promotions, as well as recommending the possible discipline or removal of uniform and civilian employees of the department for violating laws or department rules.

The commission also oversees an Outside Services Fund and can advocate for expenditures that are not part of the regular budget. Disbursement recommendations are always to benefit the department's daily activities, making it easier for the department to serve the town. A few samples

of recent approvals submitted to BOS and FB include hardware and training with a drone to assist officers in searches and accident reconstruction and providing funds for the temporary garage that houses sensitive and expensive equipment.

Besides the challenges presented by the global pandemic, the commission has had its share of challenges, from regular activities to assisting in the search of a new Chief and Major. Currently, we're preparing to conduct interviews for the open Captain position and overseeing the hiring process of officers. (The department has open positions and must consider the number of officers who are fully qualified for retirement).

In addition to personnel changes and the shortage of applicants, our present and future challenges include the national atmosphere on law enforcement, mandates, compliance, evolution of technology, the need for a new communication system, aging and outgrown Headquarters, and fair compensation. Considering the ongoing expenditures of the town, we know that we must make do with our 40-year-old Headquarters building. In the long run, fixing and retrofitting the aging building would be a waste of money, even though we have no chance of embarking on another substantial building project in Town to replace it.

Bottom line - always involves money! The police department serves 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year, with no days off. Public safety is a basic need of American life, but if the department is not properly funded, the level of service it's able to provide will have to be adjusted. It's hard to quantify savings or effects on property values if service levels decrease. Our world is changing rapidly. Everything costs more - from fuel to equipment - especially in the past year. Each board and commission is looking for more money to support its services. Right now, there's little to no cooperation between boards and commissions that would weigh the level of service a department provides to the amount of revenue it produces. Better interaction between our boards and commissions could result in a better understanding of what the Town wants and needs and

POLICE DEPARTMENT

John Puglisi



The Brookfield Police Department has the responsibility to uphold social order within the authorized confines and constraints set forth by ethical and constitutional requirements.

The following are components of the Department's responsibility: protection of life and property, preservation of peace and liberty, prevention and investigation of crimes, regulation of non-criminal conduct, and delivery of miscellaneous police services to the community.

Challenges:

◆ Workforce (recruitment and retention of qualified law enforcement personnel)

The Department currently has two vacancies and seven officers eligible for retirement. These vacancies, both current and future, cause scheduling issues and tap into our overtime funding

◆ Policy (preparing for the unpredictable)

Changes to Statewide policies such as “Use of Force” and “Transparency of Police Operations,” such as mandated body worn cameras, require additional training to ensure that our officers are performing in accordance with these Statewide policies and mandates

◆ Training (challenges using technology to meet training needs)

The limitation of in-person training and a shift to fee-based online training has put a strain on our training budget.

◆ Supervision (succession planning)

Retirements of our senior officers caused a loss of some institutional knowledge and mentoring of our junior officers.

◆ Discipline (how we police ourselves)

Although the Department operates in a superior ethical manner, the implementation of Department Rules and General Orders, as well as the Police Accountability Act requirements, demand constant monitoring and re-evaluation of our Policies.

◆ Facility and Equipment Replacement (end-of-life or obsolete technology)

Space Needs Assessment for the police facility was completed in 2017, with recommendations at significant costs. Significant time and funding will be required to effectuate the replacement of the Town-wide Emergency Communication System.



We’re currently recruiting through policeapp.com to fill our vacancies without lowering current standards - competing with other departments seeking qualified candidates. We’re working with a Radio Consultant and setting up a Communication Committee to assist with the Town-wide Emergency Communication System replacement. We continue to work on crime prevention and investigation by using public interaction events and social media to help educate the public. Our Community Outreach Team will continue building upon the miscellaneous services to the community, such as CT Special Olympics, Coffee with a Cop, National Night Out, Stuff a truck, as well as meetings with our senior citizens on crime prevention. Our new Youth Officer and School Resource Officers remain steadfast in their commitment to help educate youth at the schools in areas of crime and drug use prevention, bullying and cyber-crime.

To achieve the goals set forth above, we plan to stay competitive with salaries for retention of senior staff and supervisors. The Department will fully implement our General Orders, for which our officers have full access through our on-line platform in compliance with accreditation requirements. By creating an Accreditation Officer position, we’ll begin the process of meeting the Police Accountable Act requirements. We continue to ‘make do’ with space limitations in our building, but accreditation requirements will need to be addressed soon. We’ll look for alternative sources of funding to meet the Communication Committee’s recommendation to hire a Project Manager and fund the radio replacement project.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Ralph Tedesco

The Department of Public Works is made up of two “sub-departments”- the Highway Department and the Facility Maintenance Department. The Highway Department is comprised of a supervisor, ten (10) driver / laborers, a mechanic, and an assistant mechanic. Their job responsibilities include maintaining the town right-of-way, which includes the roadway, adjacent trees, drainage system, small bridges and road signs. We also maintain over 100 plated vehicles, from our own department, as well as Parks and Rec, the Police Department, and various other departments. There is also a Residential Recycling Center open to the public, where we collect vegetative debris, leaves and glass. This is also the yard the DPW uses to temporarily stage vegetative debris generated from hurricanes and other windstorms.



The Facility Maintenance Department is comprised of two (2) full time employees, the Facilities Manager, and a Building Maintainer. There are also two (2) part-time custodians. The job responsibilities of Facility Maintenance are to inspect, maintain and improve all our town-owned buildings, including the Town Hall, Senior Center, Police Department, Library, Highway Garage, Old Town Hall (Parks and Rec.) and a rental home located at 43 Silvermine Road.

At the Town Hall, we have the central Department of Public Works Office. This office houses the Director of Public Works and an Administrative Assistant. In addition to assisting with the items above, we aid our residents by fielding and responding to a wide variety of concerns and complaints. We issue permits for recycling and waste, road openings and the construction of new and existing driveways. We enter and adjust purchase orders for all the department’s purchases and monitor budgets daily.

The Director of Public Works also serves as the Town Engineer – it’s out of this office that the Pavement Management Plan is implemented, capital improvement projects are planned, scheduled, budgeted, and designed and the MS4 Program is organized and accomplished. Engineering assistance is also provided to other departments and commissions, as needed.

Hazard Mitigation Planning is also done from this office.

As of January 1, 2022, our roads, drainage system and buildings were all in good condition, except for a few of our small bridges that are in fair condition, with work planned in the coming years. The State of CT handed responsibility of these to the municipalities. The library is probably in the most compromised condition. Over the past few years, we upgraded the heating system and replaced the roof, but due to the uncertainty of the building’s future, there was hesitation to invest large sums of money into the structure.

In 2021, we budgeted to install new windows, an ADA entrance, and a new ADA bathroom. Construction will take place in 2022 and 2023, which should bring this facility up to par with the others. Our fleet of vehicles is in good condition, although wear and tear over the last few years (due to numerous FEMA disasters, including Sandy, the macro burst, Alfred, Nemo, Ida, Isaias and Irene) has taken its toll. Vehicle maintenance and replacement should be a priority going forward.

There will be other challenges that present themselves in 2022. Rising commodity prices will negatively impact our gas, diesel, fuel oil and asphalt prices. Currently, we’re paying approximately \$1.70 per gallon for fuel oil based on favorable current contracts. As these contracts expire, costs will likely increase considerably based on current market conditions. Material cost will also go up as the price of metals and lumber rises, which will negatively impact the cost of automotive parts and building maintenance supplies. If supply chain issues are not resolved in the coming months, then even with rising prices, it will be hard to get the things we need to keep our facilities and equipment in good working condition. Weather is also expected to impact the DPW in the future, as it has in the recent past. Over the last few years, damaging storms have become more frequent and violent. There’s no reason to believe that this pattern will stop. This will strain our work force, equipment, and overtime budget, and could potentially cost the town additional money to clean the town right-of-way in a future severe event, such as a macro burst, hurricane, or ice storm.

We’ll build on our accomplishments by continuing to implement efficient Pavement Management, Building Maintenance and Hazard Mitigation plans by cutting out new and additional “wish list” items that are not a current necessity, by demonstrating that we can take care of the things we have before we buy something new, by providing proper training to our labor force so we can do more in-house, rather than use contract labor, and by being ready for severe storms with debris removal resources available if a situation presents itself.

REGISTRARS OF VOTERS

Dotti Dori & Mel Butow

Registrars of Voters, one Democratic and one Republican, are elected by the voters to serve for four years. The present term is 2020-2024. The registrars receive their authority and responsibilities from the Secretary of the State, who is the Commissioner of Elections. They’re responsible for the proper conduct of elections and the maintenance of accurate voter registration records, as defined in the State Statutes.

Each Registrar is required to appoint a Deputy who would serve if the Registrar was unable to complete the four year term. We also appoint Permanent Assistant Registrars to help with office duties. At the present our teams are:

Democrat
Registrar – Dotti Dori
Deputy Elizabeth Hegarty
Assistant Joan Oppenheimer

Republican
Registrar – MelButow
Deputy Cathy Ionnone
Assistant Maureen Spies

We hire approximately 50 workers for Elections and Referenda. The work at polling places, Town Hall and count Absentee Ballots. The Town of Brookfield is now divided into 3 Voting Districts for State and Federal Elections. We also staff Election Day Registration during November elections.

District 1 is west of the Still River. The polling place is at St. Marguerite Parish Hall.
District 2 is east of the Still River. The polling place is at Brookfield High School.
District 3 is a new District located near the Newtown and Bridgewater boundaries. The polling place is at Brookfield High School.

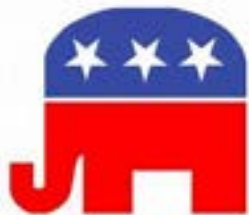
Enrollment Figures: May 2022

District 1:
Republicans 1493
Democrats 1202
Unaffiliated 2192
Other 74
Total 4961

District 2:
Republicans 1572
Democrats 1288
Unaffiliated 2160
Other 108
Total 5128

District 3:
Republicans 683
Democrats 582
Unaffiliated 1045
Other 43
Total 2353

Total Voters 12,442



- From January 2021 to May 2022
- ◆ Completed Annual Canvass of Brookfield voters in the spring of 2021 and 2022
 - ◆ Maintained the official Voter List as required by State Statutes Report from January 2021-May 2022
- 977 - New Voters were added to the enrollment list
1902 - Voters moved within Town or moved to Inactive List
1356 - Voters were moved to the “off” list

The voter list is constantly changing – although numbers may remain the same, the status of individual voters changes.

- ◆ Provided the necessary notices, personnel and equipment for elections, referenda, primaries, town meetings and caucuses
- ◆ Held Mandatory and Special Registration Sessions
- ◆ Attended Training Sessions and Required Meetings

The role of the Registrars of voters is to keep accurate voter records in order to provide safe and fair elections. We do this in a non-partisan way following the direction of the Secretary of the State and the Statutes of the State of Connecticut. Elections are now included in the essential infrastructure of our country. We’re constantly aware of protecting both the physical and cyber-security of the election process. Logic and Accuracy tests are conducted before each trip to the polls to ensure the accuracy of the vote.

Our office has faced several challenges recently. The current election climate is sure to present us with more. We intend to be prepared to face them. To do this, we’ll require the cooperation of the Town to enable us to take advantage of educational opportunities and technological advances. Brookfield has traditionally been part of only one State Senatorial District. As a result of the 2020 Census, that’s changed – we’re now in two districts. This will require opening a third polling place for State and Federal Elections.

We should give more thought to the physical safety of our voters and our workers. A 2018 Macrobust during a referendum highlighted the weaknesses of our Emergency Contingency Plan. We conducted a safe and accurate Presidential Election during the worldwide pandemic. It should not go without notice that no cases of Covid-19 can be traced back to the polls.

Shortly before the onset of the pandemic, we faced two challenges. We had to move the polling place for District I out of Huckleberry Hill School. St. Marguerite agreed to let us use their community room until the new school is ready. Since we’re not able to store our supplies there, we were faced with the challenge of finding a new storage place. We’re currently using Room 129, but this situation is not ideal.

Moving the polling place pointed out more challenges in setting up for elections. The Registrars are no longer able to move all this equipment on their own. We require help from the Town to

transport our supplies back and forth from Town Hall to the polls and back.

Due to office reorganization, we moved our operations to a new location, and are still adjusting to this move. A positive result has been the relocation of our Active and Inactive Voter Registration Cards to fireproof cabinets closer to our desks. Workspace is difficult at busy times, when we have our whole team working at the same time.

Voting Technology is constantly changing. The State of Connecticut chose to go with optical scanners when we left the lever machines behind. These machines leave a paper trail and have proven to be accurate. Since there are paper ballots, a hand count is always possible. These machines are aging and the Secretary of the State is investigating when and how we can replace them.

On a local level, the Town has recently purchased laptops for us so that we can check voters in using electronic poll books.

We also have Ballot Marker machines that enable handicapped voters to vote independently. These are due to be updated so that those who do not have hands can vote on their own.

The State will also be providing us with a translation service to help those voters who do not speak English understand the process and vote independently.

We feel that a review of our duties, responsibilities and compensation is overdue. Thank you for the opportunity to tell you who we are.

RETIREMENT BENEFITS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RBAC)

Michael Matson (former Chairman)

The Retirement Benefits Advisory Committee (RBAC) was established in February 2010 to render advice to the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance on issues concerning the Town’s pension program and other post-retirement benefits provided to Town employees. The committee also focuses on the Pension Trust Fund and OPEB Trust Fund established to fund future pension and OPEB benefits. There are approximately 170 active participants and 130 inactive/retired eligible for benefits.

Over the years, the committee has helped restructure and enhance the Town’s retiree plans, introducing a town-matched 401(a) plan as an alternative to a traditional pension plan, and updated the pension plan itself to more of a “hybrid” plan combining key aspects of traditional pension with the flexibility and portability benefits of the town-matched 401(a) plan.

The committee has led the selection process for vendors who support employees and town

leaders in managing those plans, including actuaries, investment firms, and plan administration.

The RBAC committee has focused on informing Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Board of Education and Water Pollution Control Authority of the importance of annually funding 100% of the Actuarially Determined Employer Contribution (ADEC) to the plan. The town’s plan funding policy is to contribute 100% of the ADEC to the plan annually.

RBAC works directly with the plan Investment Adviser to determine and monitor overall asset allocation and positions within the investment portfolio. As of fiscal year-end 2021, the town had \$75,141,284 in its pension trust, and plan liabilities are 123% funded. This will help the town weather the vagaries of market fluctuations. The committee is proud to note Brookfield’s pension funding status is one of the better funding positions in the State – and better than the posture the committee inherited (approximately 80% funded) when formed back in 2010.

The committee has worked with the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance in multiple communications with outside municipal rating agencies and the town’s Investment Counsel regarding bond issuance. We want to assist in helping the town maintain the current A\RM bond rating. In 2015, RBAC encouraged town leaders to initiate the process of building its OPEB trust, which has a value of \$1,278,560 as of the June 30, 2020, Actuarial Valuation Report with a total of 421 members.

While there is no mandated required funding level - the Town funds the majority of OPEB benefits on a “pay as you go” basis. The ADEC for 2021 fiscal year was \$1,199,907. RBAC expects the required ADEC contribution will follow the recent trend - lower as fewer retirees will be eligible for OPEB benefits and contributions to the OPEB Trust are made annually.

Looking ahead, the RBAC committee will continue to monitor effectiveness of the retirement program offered, work with Investment Advisor in determining appropriate asset allocation as outlined in the Investment Policy Statement, monitor performance of investments, and track the OPEB liabilities vs. assets. The overarching priority is to help facilitate a leading-edge retirement benefit program for all Town of Brookfield’s employees at a reasonable cost to the Town.

SENIOR CENTER

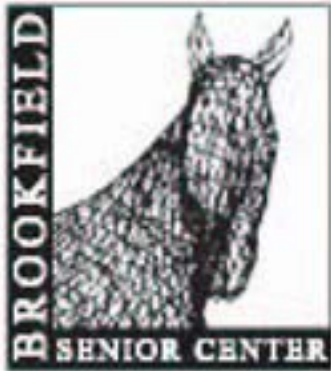
Ellen Melville

Over the last two years, Brookfield Senior Center has worked hard to keep our senior population connected and informed through monthly newsletters, weekly updates, telephone calls, birthday cards, ‘Lunches to Go,’ ‘grab and go’ events, zoom events, outdoor parties and a variety of other activities and programs. Overnight we had to reimagine what a senior center would look like during a shut down and how to keep our seniors engaged, active and healthy during this time.

In the Fall of 2021, we began offering in-person events with limited headcounts and preregistration.

Many of our seniors told us that we had created a “safe” place for them to socialize and reconnect. We personally reached out to those seniors who were isolated to encourage their participation and began offering in-house congregate lunch in October to feed our seniors and offer socialization.

A needs survey to our members revealed that many seniors appreciated our efforts to keep the community connected during this time – with many eager to ‘get back to normal.’ Others are still extremely hesitant and concerned. Our primary focus will be managing our programs and offerings for both ends of the spectrum. As we move further into 2022, we continue to offer many of the virtual and take-home programs that have proven successful, while offering additional in-person events as we’re able. We’re increasing class size and program offerings as protocols permit, moving towards a fully robust calendar of activities.



Brookfield Senior Center
“... a place where things are happening!”



Given that many seniors have lost some mobility and functionality during the last year, we’re offering classes aimed at gently reintroducing exercise and socialization and will continue those wellness activities and classes along with mental health resources and programs. We’re planning a Health and Activities Fair this summer to introduce new ideas and programs. We have reintroduced in-house educational seminars on a wide variety of topics, including cooking and nutrition, financial and legal issues, safety and scam-avoidance and visits from nature and wildlife experts.

As we work to redefine what our senior center looks like in a post-pandemic world, we’re incorporating the lessons learned during the pandemic and retaining what worked well before. Many of our seniors have gained technology literacy during this time and we’re incorporating more programs using technology. We continue collaborating with other senior centers and with local agencies and businesses to remain agile and relevant in our programs and events.

Our greatest resource is our excellent staff and instructors. Their exceptional teamwork is serving us well as we learn from all our initiatives – the failures and successes. This strong focus on teamwork will continue.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ellen Melville

Brookfield Social Services has continued to serve all our clients in need throughout the past few years. At the outset of the Pandemic - when obtaining food was a critical issue - Brookfield Social Services offered “grab and go” Food Pantry bags for all. No one was turned away. We continued to operate the Food Pantry weekly, even when Brookfield Town Hall was closed. We remained in contact with clients, via telephone and zoom calls, and held appointments outside, as needed. We installed an outdoor secure “drop box” so that paperwork could be safely delivered.



We created “Brookfield Recovers,” under the oversight of the First Selectman and Finance Department, assisting residents who had lost their jobs with funds and food donated by many of their generous Brookfield neighbors. Residents applied for grants to cover housing and utility costs as their funds were stretched in keeping a roof over their heads. As state and federal programs became available, we assisted clients with referrals and paperwork to apply for these. In many ways, we’re continuing as we always have - helping residents in need find the resources available to assist them in regaining their independence. The ‘HOW’ has changed – more program applications are online, and the processes have been simplified. Interviews are often held virtually.

Moving through the pandemic, we see an increase in mental health issues and will be focused on identifying more resources. More seniors are homebound, needing food delivery and home visits, so we’re working with volunteers, the public health nurse, and outside agencies to meet these needs.

We moved all our files online and have changed Food Pantry protocols to make our services more efficient, as well as Covid-compliant. We continue to rely on our extensive network of volunteers and donors to allow us to offer our residents in need a fully stocked food pantry. This assists them in saving valuable resources for needs other than food.

We plan to expand our partnership with the Brookfield Public Health Nurse to offer important medical and socialization visits for our homebound residents. We’re also working with other food networks and volunteers to meet the nutritional needs of the homebound with expanded food delivery services. We continue to work with the Brookfield Police Department, Emergency Services and the Brookfield School system in an ongoing effort to meet more of the behavioral health needs of residents.

STILL RIVER GREENWAY AD-HOC COMMITTEE

Jay Annis



The Still River Greenway was opened in October 2016 and is one of the most utilized Greenways in the State. Last year, over 90,000 people visited the Greenway. Two and a half years ago, an Ad Hoc Committee was established by the Board of Selectmen to explore extending the Greenway north to New Milford. In that time, the committee has researched funding options, proposed routes, and held meetings with both the Economic and Community Development Dept and citizens.

Funding for an engineering design study has been hard to come by as sources of funding for design are limited. However, funding for the study has been approved from the town’s ARPA funds. RFPs were sent out and Stantec Engineering has been selected to conduct the study. We expect the study to be completed this Fall at the latest.

An additional obstacle has been navigating the Town Center/Four Corners area – options to move north are problematic. However, in working with the ECD, a viable route has been included in the Streetscape 6 proposal. With approval of the town budget, most of the construction costs for that portion of the Greenway would be paid by the state.

When the design study is completed, we can then move to secure grant funding for construction for the balance of the greenway for which there are many more sources. Additionally, it appears that more money will be available than in recent years as the legislature has approved doubling the amount for DEEP grants than last year, partially due to many projects not having been able to be funded.

Lastly, our committee is in regular contact with our counterparts in New Milford to ensure that our paths will eventually connect.



TAX COLLECTOR

Roberta Sinatra

The last two years have been challenging, but the Tax Office was able to navigate through them successfully. The Town Hall administration and staff had to implement practices to provide our taxpayers with the services they needed with limited staff and access. We all felt safe and proud of our accomplishments.



The Tax Office already had an online payment system in place. The staff encouraged and educated our taxpayers on how to use it. A dropbox was placed outside during business hours and was monitored by the lobby staff.

Taxpayers could get payments to us quickly. Additionally, we provided our taxpayers with envelopes in our billings to mail payments.

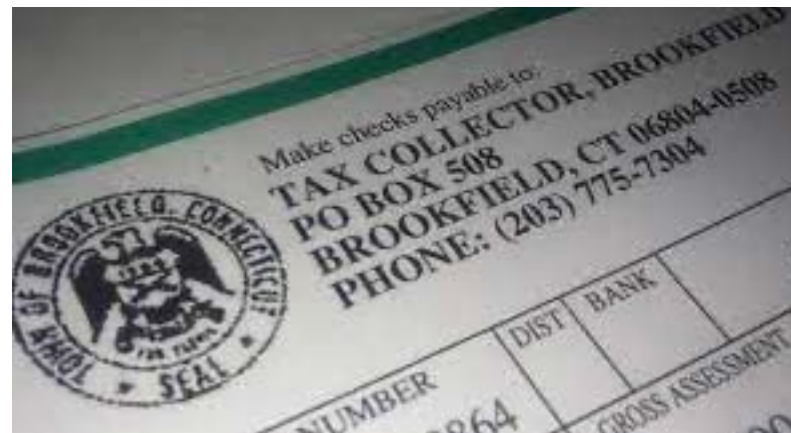
We created a hybrid office model. The staff worked from home while I went to the office, keeping the work current and organized. The staff picked up work as needed and used their laptops to complete daily tasks. Taxpayers were able to contact us by phone and email.

Once staff came back to Town Hall, we were able to make appointments with taxpayers. As Covid numbers started to drop and vaccinations were available, taxpayers were allowed back into the building. The dropbox was removed, as the lobby opened and no longer needed additional lobby staff.

Governor Lamont put forth many pandemic initiatives to help the taxpayers of Connecticut. The Town of Brookfield offered the Deferment Program that allowed taxpayers to apply for a 90-day extension. Program applications were available on the Town of Brookfield website. This program was available for the July 2020 and January 2021 collection periods. We had 32 accounts for July 2020 and 29 accounts for January 2021.

The collection rate has held steady over the past five years. It was 99.92% for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. The Tax Office held a Tax Sale in October 2021. We'll continue to monitor the real estate collections.

The Tax Office will continue to work with Tax Serv Capital Services, LLC to help with delinquent motor vehicle bills. We'll also continue to use the State Marshal to improve personal property collections.



TOWN CLERK

Andrea DiStephan

Town clerks are public information officers who serve as liaisons between local government and the public. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to, (1) proper maintenance of public records, (2) vital statistics, (3) elections, and (4) licensing. The role is tasked with over 500 duties that are performed daily to every 4 years.

Recent projects in the Town Clerk's office include increasing accessibility to land records, ensuring title searchers, attorneys and residents have access to necessary documents for timely completion of critical events, such as a property transfer or mortgage closing. In addition, we're re-indexing trade name registrations. Recently, we completed a multi-year project sorting, scanning, printing on archival safe paper, and creating minute books of decades of banker-boxed meeting minutes of various boards and commissions. The completion of these projects ensures that going forward, these minutes will remain available and accessible without harm or loss.

Looking ahead, we'll continue organizing and preserving documents to increase recovery, should documents become damaged or misplaced while we catch the past up to present practices. Time and financial needs present a challenge with the work that lies ahead; however, taking advantage of an annual grant offered through the State's Historical Document Preservation Fund will provide much-needed funds to continue the progress made thus far. Cross-training Town Hall employees could be a creative and cost-effective way to offer extra department hours to departments in need during downtime in another department, while increasing our colleagues' knowledge base to better serve our residents.

TOWN TREASURER

John Lucas

In the early part of 2020, we saw interest rates decline significantly, affecting the amount of interest the Town earned on our investable balances. During that time, we saw a decrease of close to at least \$350k of investment revenue from the previous fiscal year, but we were able to work closely with our two banking institutions - Union Savings and Newtown Savings Bank - to ensure we pulled in a market rate by expanding our investment options from the traditional money market to more sophisticated products known as an Insured Cash Sweep and a Repurchase Agreement.

While these instruments were yielding close to zero for a fair amount of the year, we were earning more than what we would have been had we been more relaxed and stayed in the money market. Looking into 2022, as interest rates are rising, we're working proactively with our bank reps to ensure we stay as conservatively aggressive as we're allowed to be to maximize future interest income.

Actively managing our money within the tight constraints of the rules for a municipality is very different than say an Etrade account - we can't dump 25 million into BITCOIN; but we're keeping in close contact with the bank to ensure we don't miss an appropriate yield as the rate environment changes.

In looking at the number of checks the Town side processed in the last couple of fiscal years, one of the interesting things is that number is declining as time progresses. Special thanks Lorraine - one of the employees in the Town Finance department - who identified this one area of efficiency by asking all the departments to consolidate billing for the large scale vendors we work with, namely Amazon and WB Mason.

The Finance Department continues to skillfully navigate through these challenging times, be it through continuing to implement proper controls and procedures (where at one point there were none), or finding efficiencies like Lorraine has, and most importantly - actively managing our finances to address future town needs and ensure we make it through that debt bubble as Tara has mentioned. I'm working with our banks quite frequently to actively manage our funds and generate some kind of yield in a very uncertain environment, reviewing our outgoing payments through the weekly check runs, and ensuring all the proper checks and balances are updated and strengthened where necessary.

WATER POLLUTION CONTROL
AUTHORITY (WPCA)
Nelson Malwitz

Brookfield was founded in 1778, but the first sewer system in what was historically a farm community began two centuries later in 1975. The collection system was intended to service commercial properties along the rapidly developing Federal Road spine—the main traffic corridor through the town. The CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) authorized the installation of regional wastewater treatment plants (WWTP), established in neighboring Danbury. The southern section of Federal Road in Brookfield was eventually dubbed the “miracle mile,” bringing commercial services in a concentrated area building the tax base.

In the early 1990s, the municipal sewer system was extended further up Federal Road to the New Milford border. That allowed the development of commercial properties, further increasing the tax base. It also allowed several condo communities with failed septic systems and new developments to connect from about 2005 to 2015. All four public schools were connected by 2009. Approaching 2020, several large affordable and incentive apartment complexes were built or approved. These have now taken up the remaining treatment capacity. Most of the remaining sections of Town remain in the sewer avoidance area, a designation required by the State.

According to the CT Council of Small Towns (COST), many small Connecticut towns do not have sewer capacity and infrastructure to support housing development mandated by the State.

Wastewater capacity is a big concern that small towns, including Brookfield, struggle to address. In Brookfield, the system is at its limit of allowable flow with projects currently approved. Consequently, at the beginning of 2022, the WPCA was forced to declare a partial moratorium on new service for all except commercial buildings, which have lower wastewater requirements.

Brookfield WPCA has been able to hold fees to about 10% below the state average. This has been accomplished by using an all-volunteer board, moving to a new operations center in 2017, and increasing efficiency using state-of-the-art technology, while holding staffing levels constant. Pump stations are constantly monitored and report electronically if something needs attention. The field staff have smart tablets that locate what is underground from a 4G wireless GIS system at any spot in town. That same system is used interactively to create real-time status reports on demand.

The billing system has been streamlined and enhanced to include charges for grease trap and private pump station inspections to prevent backups or spills of wastewater. Manholes now have a routine inspection schedule and are in the process of being retrofitted with cover seals to prevent water inflow during large rain events.



Administration service has been enhanced by installing new computers, a new server, and an electronic conference room. Billing services are increasingly automated. While the WPCA is a standalone enterprise within the town, it does take advantage of employee resources, such as administering benefits, the time and attendance program, and the View Permit program. The WPCA takes the lead on the Call-Before-You-Dig service for Brookfield.

Major initiatives are underway to develop a plan for adding sewer collection along the low-lying areas of Dean and Pocono Roads and the Candlewood Peninsula. This is a follow-up of a 2019 project that shows that deep well drinking water and Candlewood Lake are heavily contaminated by septic influence. This is the subject of a \$1.5 million planning project to be completed late 2022. The study includes how to handle the wastewater. New infrastructure federal grants are available to assist in funding this project that affects multiple towns in the region.

For 2022 and beyond, the WPCA will focus on remediating the inflow of nutrients to rivers and lakes in Brookfield, resolving the capacity issue to lift the moratorium, and applying for grants to sponsor these projects. It will also seek to be better integrated with the land use departments in the town and continue with strategic investments in modern equipment and technology.

YOUTH COMMISSION

Marni McNiff

The Youth Commission provides an advocacy and information platform for youth representatives to get more engaged in town issues. It's also a platform for Brookfield's youth to bring topics of interest to the community.

In September, we worked with the BHS Club Council to bring the third consecutive Activities Fair to the school. The goal has been to showcase the wealth of extracurricular opportunities that students and advisors have created for their peers. Part of our mission is to promote enriching activities that keep student minds engaged and career focused.

In October, we held the second Youth Commission municipal candidates' forum and look forward to continuing this event every other year, as it was a huge success. Among our current projects are: Working with the Brookfield School District to bring the Sandy Hook Promise Anonymous Alert System to Brookfield High School and Whisconier Middle School and working with clubs at BHS to provide students with the opportunity to do a news broadcast.

Our projects are always based on issues of importance to students. They're the driving force of the Youth Commission, and we're extremely proud of their efforts. The Youth Commission would also like to collaborate with other town agencies on future projects or events promoting the health and happiness of youth in the town.

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS (ZBA)

Karl Hinger

The Brookfield Zoning Board of Appeals, or ZBA, serves the town as a quasi-judicial body of five elected members and three alternates. The duty of The ZBA is to hear and decide appeals and requests for variances to the zoning ordinances and regulations in harmony with their general purpose and intent. This board works to ensure that the zoning regulations do not place an undue hardship on the property owners of the town and when such a hardship is brought before the board, working with the property owner to ensure they may have justice while keeping the interests of the town intact.

The nature of the ZBA does not allow it to create policy in itself, but instead provide leniency when necessary and appropriate. As such, the ZBA both in previous years and going forward will continue to serve the townspeople when matters of zoning ordinances and regulations bring unusual hardships upon them.

To ensure this goal, the ZBA is currently working amongst itself to update the bylaws which govern its members' actions and duties, both within meetings and while reviewing cases. This will help it to function more cohesively going forward, preventing unnecessary strain and reducing the tedium of its meetings.

ZONING COMMISSION

Anne Vogel (past Chairwoman)

The zoning commission is comprised of 5 voting members plus 3 alternate members, with a mix of both elected and appointed officers. We're in place to fulfill the statutory requirements of CGS Chapter 124 relating to land use and Zoning in particular. Specifically, we're charged with upholding the boundaries and regulations of the various zoning districts encompassing both residential and business districts - abiding by and enforcing such regulations where appropriate. With the zoning regulations as our guide, we strive to ensure the safety of persons and property and maintain the integrity of our town to the best of our ability. We support the Land Use Department in its efforts to do the same. The Zoning Commission keeps itself informed as to the best practices in matters of town zoning. To this end, we maintain partnerships with adjoining municipalities, as well as monitoring zoning trends of municipalities throughout Connecticut. In addition, we act in conjunction with other town commissions - sharing information and knowledge in a collaborative effort to achieve the highest and best outcome.

During the challenging months of the Covid crisis, we were able to perform our duties without many hitches. We mobilized instantly, seamlessly transitioning from in-person meetings to Zoom, with strong attendance by commissioners and the public alike. The commission understood the challenges of doing business during Covid - especially for restaurants - and made changes in enforcement of our regulations to allow outdoor dining, always with safety in mind. Being cognizant of the upcoming executive orders to relax the enforcement, we acted in advance of these orders to ensure the health of Brookfield businesses. We strove to do everything possible to ensure the stability of all businesses throughout Brookfield and are proud to say that all but one restaurant in Brookfield survived. We relaxed our enforcement on sign standards, to enable businesses to let the public know they were open. The previous chairman worked closely and personally with all restaurant owners, visiting the sites, and working in tandem with other departments - including building, fire and police to ensure the safety and welfare of the public. Within 60 days, we had altered the landscape of serving food and doing business in Brookfield.

For over a year, while Town Hall was officially closed, our ZEO officer, Mr. Fran Lollie, continued to come to work every day, enabling uninterrupted progress of applications and all zoning business. Together with the commissioners, he remained completely accessible to the Brookfield residents and businesses. This enabled commercial developers to continue to plan their projects in anticipation of things opening post-Covid, and likewise enabled homeowners to advance their home renovation plans. It also always kept the Zoning Commission busy - there were no meetings cancelled and the board maintained full attendance.

Optimization in the recent past, with an eye on the future:

In December 2018, the ZC formed an Ad Hoc committee and began a comprehensive rewrite of the Brookfield Zoning Regulations. Over the course of two years, the regulations saw a re-map of material, making information more accessible, more user-friendly, and easier to understand by both the public and developers. With an eye towards modifying inconsistencies and holes, we endeavored to be all-inclusive, engaging the help of outside experts, the citizens of Brookfield, and all those on the Ad-Hoc committee.

We continue to polish and amend as necessary, based on feedback from the public, as in an ongoing effort to strive for perfection. We consider these regulations to be a living document and are confident that we have a stable set of regulations, amenable to additions and revisions that will evolve with the times. These regulations can be found on our town website.

Key performance indicators of our commission:

Full attendance of commissioners at our meetings has been key to our ongoing success, as having all commissioners present ensures continuity from meeting to meeting to handle applications and ensures timely disposition of them. A high level of commitment by your commissioners to be present at every meeting ensures town business is conducted in a timely manner.

Ongoing, we’re executing on the COPD and specifically the Town Center District plan as per the town’s desire (as evidenced by the survey in 2010) to create a village center. Moving forward, we feel we’re well-positioned to serve the people of Brookfield.

Challenges - respectfully representing the will of the people of Brookfield, while following state law and the public’s lack of awareness of the Zoning Commission’s role, responsibilities, and limits of authority.

Goals - to mindfully carry out the duties of our commission and to assess any changes based on feedback from the public. We hope to champion through the challenges we face with Public Act No. 21-29. We aim to accurately assess the benefits and pitfalls of new commercial and residential development to maintain the integrity of our landscape while welcoming growth. Through all, we serve the town at the level of excellence it deserves.

We’d like to be more visible to the community, to raise awareness of the Land Use Department, educate the community so they’re aware of and take advantage of our accessibility. We envision the Town Clerk’s office providing a packet of information for new homeowners that covers important Land Use regulations of the town, to make homeowners aware of what they sometimes need to do when modifying their properties - a ‘welcome wagon’ from Land Use.

Included in the packet could also be the many services the town supplies, such as the brush pile, glass recycling, oil recycling, sand in the winter, parks, etc. - or perhaps a monthly postcard mailed to town residents and businesses, similar to Spotlight, but featuring a different town employee each month and their role, in addition to town services.

